

# IDYLLS OF THE QUEEN



The Uniform Edition of the Works of  
PHILIP GUEDALLA

"A writer who is son of Ariel and the  
nephew of Puck."—*Sir Edmund Gosse.*

'Mr. Guedalla writes his history not  
as one who consults and transcribes  
documents, but as one who has so lived  
in the period that fact, comment,  
gossip, quotation, simply flow from  
the tip of his pen.'—*Punch.*

THE DUKE

PALMERSTON

THE SECOND EMPIRE

IDYLLS OF THE QUEEN

RAG-TIME AND TANGO

# IDYLLS OF THE QUEEN

PHILIP GUEDALLA

*"And with choice paintings of wise men I hung  
The royal dais round."*

THE PALACE OF ART

LONDON  
HODDER AND STOUGHTON

IDYLLS OF THE QUEEN CONTAINS  
MR. PHILIP GUEDALLA'S VICTORIAN  
STUDIES FOR INCLUSION IN THE  
UNIFORM EDITION OF HIS COLLECTED  
WORKS.

FOR THIS VOLUME HE HAS ASSEMBLED  
AND REVISED HIS WRITINGS WHICH  
FORMERLY APPEARED IN THE FOL-  
LOWING BOOKS:

THE QUEEN AND MR. GLADSTONE

THE BRADENHAM EDITION OF THE  
NOVELS AND TALES OF  
BENJAMIN DISRAELI

BONNET AND SHAWL: AN ALBUM

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TO  
MY MOTHER'S MEMORY  
BECAUSE  
SHE HELD ME UP TO SEE THE QUEEN

QUEEN VICTORIA, like all the rest of us, has had her ups and downs in the last fifty years. The epoch opened with the sober dignity of her first Jubilee, at which a grateful people celebrated cordially, but without hysteria, their ageing ruler's fifty years of queenship (and twenty-five of widowhood). Her place in popular esteem was mounting, and her subjects viewed her now with the regard reserved in 1887 for elderly relations. Fifty years before they had acclaimed her girlish figure as a welcome change from three remarkably unpleasing predecessors of whom the first was mad, the second unsavoury, and the third absurd. For the last two Georges and King William combined to form a background that was admirably calculated to set off the charms of almost any normal human being. Not that her subjects were uncritical, since those ages which accept the institution of monarchy without question find it unnecessary to exempt the sovereign from criticism. It is only when the institution itself is challenged that the monarch's person is surrounded with a sacred hush ; and the Queen's surroundings for the first twenty years of her long reign were anything but hushed. A cheerful irreverence surviving from the stormy days of Queen Caroline and King Billy accompanied the slow unfolding of her royal life and scrutinised without false reticence her consort and her growing nursery. But the advancing tide of decorum and the sudden impact of her life's tragedy silenced these voices ; and after the Prince Consort's death the widowed Queen receded into a melancholy middle-distance, where a mourning figure was half seen behind the Highland

mists, invariably dressed in black and rarely separated from her memories. Since proximity is the first stimulant of popular affection, the Queen's retirement, coinciding with an awkward wave of republicanism on the Continent, was followed by a phase of positive unpopularity that caused serious concern to Ministers. It passed, however, as the Queen's advancing years supplied a ground for her retirement that was more obvious to minds that were not quite so sensitive as hers. Besides, the long duration of her reign began to weave the figure of the Queen inseparably into the nation's background; and when her Jubilee arrived in 1887, her subjects were glad to celebrate it with appropriate emotion.

Ten years went by; and the small figure in her widow's weeds was still at Osborne or Balmoral or occasionally to be seen behind a pair of horses and shadowed by impending Scotsmen in the London streets. That was the signal for her second Jubilee, in which the nation had more, far more, to say than at her first. For in the interval the Queen had grown into a symbol of imperial significance. Two causes worked the transformation, of which her own longevity was the more powerful. At her first Jubilee the Queen was little more than the royal centre of an age, surrounded (and occasionally overshadowed) by its leading figures. For Tennyson was still her Laureate, Gladstone her last—and all too probably her next—Prime Minister; Huxley and Tyndall still helped to form her subjects' minds, Jowett to launch them on careers, Leighton and Millais to paint their pictures. But by 1897 the stage was almost empty, and the Queen's figure lingered as the last reminder of a vanished age. Besides, a steady process of expansion had advanced

*her frontiers in three continents ; and after so many victories, protectorates, annexations, and spheres of influence proclaimed in the Queen's name it was inevitable that the public mind should see British sovereignty incarnate in her royal person. Queen Victoria had now become the anthropomorphic goddess of the British Empire, and that mystic worship drew her through the roaring streets in the more than Roman triumph of her Diamond Jubilee. This mood outlasted her and hushed the crowds that four years later watched her funeral with a vague sense that something a little more than human had been taken from them.*

*It was not easy for contemporaries, least of all perhaps for young contemporaries, to escape from this heroic estimate of Queen Victoria. Their early years had been pervaded by her invisible authority, and they cherished memories of great occasions upon which a sight of her had been vouchsafed to them. I was sustained for years by recollections of a winter morning in 1893 when the Queen came driving up Maida Vale with the Empress Frederick beside her. The pavements were quite empty, as the carriage trotted by with two figures in that deep mourning which was now the royal uniform ; and as it passed, my mother held me up to wave. I like to think that on the only day my eye met Queen Victoria's her small subject was appropriately dressed in a hussar cap of black astrachan, collar to match, and a frogged coat of military cut. Nor was the royal response inadequate to these manly attractions, since the Empress Frederick positively waved back at us and went on waving until the loyal couple on the pavement was almost out of sight. I saw the Queen again, once at her Diamond Jubilee—a small figure nodding in her open carriage, with a stout, red-*

coated Prince of Wales riding alongside—and once again in Holborn during one of those last drives which she took so gallantly to hearten loyal Londoners during the less satisfactory phase of the Boer War, when an eager schoolboy was a little disappointed by his glimpse of a very old lady in steel spectacles under a round hat.

But such memories made it a trifle difficult for her contemporaries to view her with detachment; and when it was achieved, their detachment was perhaps a trifle overdone. For in the next twenty years her legend sagged a little; and at the very bottom of its curve a brilliant ironist, to whom the recent past was less a pageant than a museum of curiosities, depicted her in prose that slightly overdid her oddity. This was perhaps inevitable, and it provoked a courtly reaction in which her nobler qualities in their turn were slightly overdone. But as the balance settles slowly towards equilibrium, we see her as she was—a commanding little figure with strong (and often wrong-headed) prejudices, uncontrolled emotions, and a rare gift for queen-ship in an age when monarchy had powers as well as duties.

The studies assembled in the present volume rarely stray far from the central figure of her age. Some, indeed, are aimed directly at the Queen and seek to analyse her evolution or to depict her in action, whilst others display the strange figure of the man whom she admired most after the Prince Consort or the silhouettes of other wives who were no less Victorian than Queen Victoria herself.

PHILIP GUEDALLA.

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*THE QUEEN AND MR. GLADSTONE*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

As the years fall away, the figures of the past recede and their perspective alters. Some that appeared so prominent from close at hand are scarcely visible at a short distance, whilst others seem for some reason to cast a longer shadow every year. For nothing in the world is half so perishable as estimates of our contemporaries. One figure, whose impressive outline shadowed a whole generation, wavers into mist before his obituary notices are fairly out of sight ; and in a few more years the mists are shredded under the cold breath of time into thin air. Another, of whose existence his contemporaries were only dimly aware, grows in significance until he towers above the age in which he lived.

The past recedes with all its figures like a line of coast behind a moving ship. The ship goes on ; but as the coast falls away, the watchers on the deck observe its features in a new perspective. A mountain-side by which the port was overshadowed sinks gently seaward, and the line of peaks that had been altogether masked from view climbs slowly up the sky, until it fills the whole horizon. For true perspective comes only at a distance. The long coast-line of the Nineteenth Century is receding now, and all its reputations begin to stand out in their just proportions. Some that once cast so long a shadow have already dwindled into insignificance, while two at any rate seem to have grown immensely taller when viewed across the intervening years. It would not be true to say that their age knew too little of Queen Victoria and Mr. Gladstone. If anything, it knew a shade too much. For they pervaded it. Their lightest sayings and their smallest mannerisms—her royal poise, her pony-carriage,



and her gifts of Paisley shawls ; his reverberating dialectics, his tree-fellings at Hawarden, his literary preferences, and his Sunday readings of the lesson—were of the very texture of the age ; and by a natural reaction the age turned elsewhere for a change. Contrasted types were hunted up to be admired instead ; and there was an interval of indifference, almost of disrespect, in which their names were greeted with a thin derision. But increasing distance restores a just perspective ; and as the age recedes, its two leading figures resume their true proportions. For the ship of time moves on ; the little hills drop out of sight ; and as we look back at the Nineteenth Century, the peaks come up against the sky once more.

## I

No practice can be more misleading than our way with figures of the past. An earlier generation was satisfied with a bare record of their public acts, embellished by a "character." This tribute, which was almost obligatory, consisted of a meaningless assortment of perfunctory epithets. Pronounced in the portentous tone of a funeral oration, it did no harm, since it conveyed no meaning ; and being frequently appropriate for translation into Latin prose, it possessed a modicum of educational value. But times changed ; and a more supercilious age demanded something more than these simple gestures of ancestor-worship. Respect for ancestors, indeed, was rather out of fashion in a world that had become increasingly uncomfortable to live in ; and their ungrateful children were inclined to argue that if the surrounding turmoil represented the results of ancestral wisdom, there was not much to be said for ancestors. Responsive to the new demand, enquiring pens subjected the distinguished dead to a more critical analysis. The heroes of the past were vigorously probed ; and the prevailing mood acclaimed the spirited results of these irreverent dissections, although there was a slight suspicion that the more exciting specimens owed more to their investigators'

zeal than to the objects of their study. For investigation was powerfully aided by an impressive apparatus of guess-work that was termed psychology and proved upon examination to consist in equal parts of things that were not so and things that everybody knew before.

Historically dubious in the extreme, these *enquêtes* were frequently no less misleading than the old-fashioned "character" which they had superseded. That simple chaplet of funereal epithets bore slight relation to the facts; but were the facts more accurately mirrored in the crude psychology that was now offered as a substitute? Its crudity was undeniable, since it rarely credited deceased personages with the possession of more than a single characteristic. This simple-minded shorthand has been found sufficient for their purposes by the majority of dramatists, as the conditions of their art render an extreme simplification of the facts almost inevitable: there is so much to be compressed into three hours, and it would be too much to hope that any audience could possibly identify one character with more than one characteristic. (Is not this distortion a frequent cause of weakness in novels written by successful dramatists?) A similar defect of vision is no less essential in political cartoonists, who impress their simple parables upon the public mind by identifying the most complex statesman with a single attribute—a nose, a lock of hair, a pipe, an eye-glass, or a collar. But when this convenient symbolism was transferred to the field of historical composition, its utility became more questionable. It was, no doubt, extremely tempting to dramatise the past by substituting for its shadowy occupants with their uncertain motives and half-formed designs the sharper outline of a caricature. But was the truth so simple? Was it really credible that dead monarchs and statesmen had traversed the long vicissitudes of their careers with the aid of a single characteristic? It would be a great relief to think so. But the cartoonist's method simplifies too much. Eminently dramatic, such portraiture is unreliable in the extreme, because reality is

not nearly so consistent. It was convenient to people history with a set of characters who were invariably recognisable and acted in uniform obedience to a single prescribed motive, with which they were distinctly labelled. But these portents with one feature bore no more relation to the truth than the Cyclops' solitary eye to a normal human countenance, since even public men are human, and no human being yet was ever made of one ingredient alone.

Besides, the method frequently ignored the vital circumstance of human growth. It was noticeable that its most typical creations rarely changed between the cradle and the grave, although few persons outside the fascinating pages of these studies are identical at sixty and at twenty-one. There was a fatal tendency to ignore this simple commonplace, to reconstruct some public figure in loving detail as he stood in a familiar pose at some historic moment, and to propel this effigy wholly unaltered through all the changing phases of a long career. The risks are obvious, since public men invariably impress themselves upon the public mind at a particular stage of their development. Thus, the Duke of Wellington stands in the national memory as a bleak figure uttering staccato oracles drawn from a lifetime of experience; but it would be erroneous to conclude that Arthur Wellesley was born with this equipment. Lord Palmerston is best remembered as a genial elder with a flavour of the Turf, and Mr. Gladstone as an apocalyptic voice ingeminating woe upon Lord Beaconsfield before staring rows of Midlothian electors. But what could be more misleading than to introduce those well-known figures at any earlier stage of their careers? They were not always thus. Lord Liverpool's unenterprising Secretary at War, chained to a departmental desk for nineteen years by inclination and a shrewd knowledge of his own limitations, is barely recognisable in the gay Prime Minister of 1860; and the prim, black-haired young Churchman, who answered to the name of Gladstone in 1840, would not have recognised himself in the crusading fervour of

Midlothian. For each familiar figure represents the end of a protracted process, in which time, growth, and circumstances have profoundly modified its original outline ; and sound characterisation demands that we should travel with them through each stage of the long journey.

## 2

No figure of the past requires this recognition more than Queen Victoria. It is so tempting to simplify the facts by rendering her in a single formula, to portray one small, unchanging figure which remains the same from the first summer dawn at Kensington to the last thundering salutes of her triumphant Jubilees. But nothing could be more fallacious, since few persons ever underwent more sweeping changes in the course of a long lifetime. Mr. Creevey's little Vic blushing profusely and consumed with laughter in the gay, preposterous *décor* of the Pavilion at Brighton is barely recognisable in the sober outline of Prince Albert's wife. That was her first transformation ; but there were more to follow. For that matron of progressive principles and strictly constitutional virtues was presently to vanish in the effulgence of a more incalculable figure, of the Queen-Empress before whom Disraeli swept his deepest bows. Here was another Queen Victoria, in whom Lord Melbourne would scarcely have known his pupil and Prince Albert might have been hard put to it to recognise his consort. Something had changed her utterly ; and she emerged from the metamorphosis with a full equipment of new feelings and opinions appropriate to her more imperial *rôle*. That transformation was, perhaps, her last. The years passed over her ; but Queen Victoria remained much as Lord Beaconsfield had left her, until age modified his product into the venerable figure of her Jubilees, to be the impressive object of an Empire's worship and, presently, of the world's mourning.

One must not press the point too far. For there were elements of character, as of physique, recurring through the

long story of her life and remaining almost constant, which it is fascinating to recognise as the Queen's hall-mark. But these were far outnumbered by her successive changes ; and the apparent contradictions in her story are more easily resolved by recognition of her growth than by any effort to reduce that slowly unfolding tale to a single formula. Indeed, it seems almost permissible to treat the Queen's protracted rule as a succession of three reigns of three related sovereigns. Since they were relatives, there were some features that they owned in common. But there were more that they did not ; and the three reigns are readily distinguishable.

The youngest of the three was Queen Victoria I, who succeeded to King William IV. Her reign, by far the shortest of the three, was distinguished by a romping sort of innocence. It was a girlish Regency, appropriately housed at Brighton, where she rode out with aged beaux, her ministers, and listened with admiring eyes to Lord Melbourne's explanations of everything from official business to the lamentable tone of *Oliver Twist*. She was succeeded shortly after marriage by Victoria II, a widely different type. This Queen, no less impressionable than her cheerful predecessor, bore the unmistakable impress of her married life. A gifted husband and his no less gifted confidant transformed her views ; there was a change of manners, since the royal nurseries transformed her way of life ; and it is entertaining to observe the shock sustained by former intimates of Victoria I, when they found themselves in the more austere presence of Victoria II. Lord Palmerston, a lively feature of the former Court, who used to show her how to beat her aunt at chess and had been " the one with whom I communicate oftenest after Lord Melbourne," was quite unnerved by his experience. Leaving the service of his Queen in 1841, he retired to office half-way through 1846 to find a Queen that knew not Joseph. The royal name was still the same ; not so the royal manners. Worse still the royal views that had once been derived from Melbourne's

jocular asides had undergone a solemn change. For now they did their best to echo Prince Albert's patient reproductions of Stockmar's irrefragable logic. Some influence had raised the Crown in its own esteem; it had almost ceased to be the genial British institution which Palmerston had known at Brighton; now it was hedged with a divinity more appropriate to Central Europe, where Germans were always a little apt to be mystic about monarchy. Lord Palmerston was not a mystic, and his mind was anything but German. The contrast was unfortunate, since Palmerston had been congenial to Victoria I; but there was hardly anything about him that failed to jar on Victoria II. He was distinctly Regency; his views of foreign policy were sadly lacking in the cosmopolitan enlightenment of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha; and it was scarcely possible to count him among the more improving influences in national life. The unhappy consequence was that he spent the next twenty years in an unappreciated exhibition to his sovereign of qualities that would have charmed her predecessor. Death spared Lord Melbourne the same harrowing experience.

The reign of Victoria II went majestically on. It was a sober epoch of material improvements and spiritual elevation. Ubiquitous steam-engines shrieked their way across a countryside which progress had not yet devastated; the electric telegraph startled recipients with sudden messages; iron ships, textile machinery, and suspension-bridges poured from the ample cornucopia of science to enrich, if not to embellish, English life; and a rich profusion of well-intentioned agencies—Sunday schools, Benevolent Societies, cheap printing, and diffused facilities for education—turned its attention towards higher things. Its Laureate was Mr. Tennyson, and its favourites, in striking contrast with the meretricious ornaments of the last Court, were statesmen in the sober mould of Peel and Aberdeen. It was an age of good intentions, when high-minded public men in broadcloth waved their countrymen towards a decorous millennium of cheap food and penny postage; its ideals were fairly

represented by the Great Exhibition ; and its prospects were well within the comprehension of any thoughtful rate-payer. For it was reasonably anticipated that, while the world might

“ Spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change,”

life upon its surface would continue to be much as it was at present, only a little more so. The future, it was thought, would be quite indistinguishable from the present except by certain differences of degree. There would be larger steam-engines and swifter steam-boats ; more children would attend bigger Sunday schools ; and taller chimneys would smoke over better-regulated factories. Flanked by her Consort, whose intelligence inspired many of its most typical proceedings, Victoria II presided with complete congruity over this sober carnival of enlightened common-sense. Small wonder *revenants* like Palmerston were apt to lose their way among the unfamiliar surroundings. For Palmerston took little pleasure

“ in the march of mind,

In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.”

The landmarks by which public men had steered under Victoria I were all effaced ; and royal favour was reserved for persons more in tune with the new age. The change of taste was nowhere more apparent than in the altered fortunes of Sir Robert Peel. Once the terror of Victoria I, because “ the Queen don’t like his manner after—oh ! how different, how dreadfully different, to that frank, open, natural and most kind, warm manner of Lord Melbourne,” that tightly buttoned figure was the very pattern of a modern statesman at the Court of Victoria II. For he was a public man after the Prince Consort’s heart. The requisites, it seemed, were earnestness combined with an ability to translate lofty ideals into the modest terms of

practical reform. While such tastes prevailed at Court the road was plainly open for a rising man who, once a Tory, combined a sober appetite for administrative detail with a quite unusual degree of earnestness. Eminently qualified to shine in these surroundings, he was Peel's disciple and a faithful follower of Aberdeen ; and it was not surprising that Mr. Gladstone found himself completely at home, whilst a more questionable figure moved in the gloom of Opposition, coruscating to select gatherings of younger sons and incurring the stern disapproval of a royal pen, that wrote sharply to Sir Robert that " the House of Commons ought to be ashamed of having such Members as L<sup>d</sup> G. Bentinck and that detestable Mr. D'Israeli."

The reign was brusquely interrupted by the tragic and premature removal of the Prince Consort. The consequences for the Queen were cruel, since the wound never healed. The years crept by on broken wings ; but she was haunted to the end by the memory of all that she had lost. For now she was alone, left to the company of dutiful princesses and sympathetic peeresses. It was a melancholy fate. The consequences to her subjects were, at first, less apparent. There was a becoming interval of royal mourning, of complete withdrawal from public activities, which impatient critics ultimately felt to be somewhat unduly prolonged. But the same tone which had prevailed in Albert's lifetime continued after he was gone ; if anything, it was a shade intensified ; and there could be no doubt that the reigning monarch was still Victoria II. A distinguished sceptic has speculated on the course of history, if Albert's life had been prolonged. The speculation is superfluous, because his Queen's devotion actually prolonged it as an influence on public life. For years she was content to act as he would have acted ; fond recollections of his thought remained her sole criterion of public duty ; and royal decisions were taken after consultation with some inner oracle, which told her what Albert would have done. This pathetic circumstance served to prolong his influence and



to maintain unaltered those features of the reign which he had helped to make. There was no sudden breach of continuity ; under his posthumous direction the age proceeded down the sober path of progress. The same public figures made the same gestures towards the same ideals, and statesmen who had harmonised with 1851 were still congenial in 1868. For the Queen still walked by Albert's guidance. She had always needed a man's arm to lean on. It had been simple for a girl to lean upon Lord Melbourne ; and as a wife, whilst Albert walked beside her, she asked little more than to be guided by him.

But now there was a dreadful void ; for there was nobody to stand beside her. It is a cruel fact that monarchs suffer more deeply in bereavement than humbler persons. There is no difference in their feelings ; but the consequences of their losses are apt to be far more irreparable. Others may fill the void with intimates ; but monarchy, which has no equals, can scarcely do so. The ministrations of devoted daughters and the sympathy of courtiers, even when it is sincere, are pale substitutes for a lost husband. For there can be no real companionship without equality ; and who is the equal of a widowed Queen ? That was her tragedy. She was unutterably lonely ; and there was nobody to feel for her—or rather, nobody who could express a feeling for her without presumption. Mr. Gladstone did his best : he was Prime Minister, and in his public actions he embodied all the good intentions of her former reign. But her private feelings were still unsatisfied. How could she lean on Mr. Gladstone ? His deep sympathy was always beautifully expressed. It was impossible for her to doubt it, and she was grateful. But a lonely woman could scarcely lean on Mr. Gladstone for the simple reason that he was not lonely too. That made a gulf between them. A devoted wife watched over him, and the happy couple were often at Windsor under the Queen's wistful gaze. Gladstone had never known the sorrows of bereavement ; and, however deep, his sympathy was a mere sentiment that could not rise into the loftier

harmony of fellow-feeling. Her supreme need in all those lonely years was for a fellow-feeling. It led her to seek out the company of other victims. She made a habit of condolence, almost a *culte* of widowhood, befriending Eugénie when she had lost her Emperor and doubly when a second blow deprived her of her boy. But the Prime Minister could hardly offer her that consolation. For Mr. Gladstone was not lonely ; and in consequence the Queen did not find it easy to lean completely upon him.

The wheel of politics revolved, bringing her a new Prime Minister. Would it be easier for her to lean on him ? It might be, since he was almost as lonely as the widowed Queen. A widower, he pitched his cheerless camp in friends' houses or West-End hotels. Had she not written telling him a year before, when the blow fell, that " the Queen knows also *what* Mr. Disraeli has lost and what he must suffer " ? There might be a fellow-feeling here ; and his lonely sovereign was soon sending him snowdrops and primroses with a shy intimation that " she heard that he was very fond of flowers and knew that *one* is no longer there who used to provide them for him ! " His reply was a respectful rapture, in the course of which the Prime Minister alluded to Titania : it may be doubted if Mr. Gladstone would have thought of that. But Disraeli was a more accomplished wooer, who confessed gaily that " I feel fortunate in having a female Sovereign. I owe everything to woman ; and if in the sunset of life I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence." Here was an arm, perhaps, for her to lean on ; and as Disraeli's fascination grew on her, the Queen leant.

An idyll opened, by which her loneliness was brightened. It was their common solitude, perhaps, that had first drawn the strange pair together. But Disraeli had other attractions for the Queen, since he was unusual in the extreme, and the unusual had always exercised a strong attraction on her. Had she not felt the fascination of Napoleon III, when that " very extraordinary man . . . I might almost say a mys-

terious man " appeared twenty years before against the sober background of her life ? If the craving for mystery still lingered with the Queen, Disraeli satisfied it richly with his exotic origins and strange, florid manners. It was a delight for her to send him little presents and receive his queer, emotional replies, to take small precautions for his health, and to insist upon his being seated during audiences. Here was a minister who satisfied her private feelings, who had been tested in the same cruel fires, and could gratify her with the supreme luxury of a fellow-feeling.

The consequences were quite unpredictable, since Disraeli had more interests in public life than the sentimental captivation of the Queen. Presently his aims in politics became her aims as well ; his friends were noted as her loyal servants ; and the royal eye began to view his enemies as her own. A strange apprehension of Mr. Gladstone seemed to grow on her ; and within a year of her change of ministers Disraeli diagnosed her solicitude for his own health as " occasioned . . . not so much from love of me as dread of somebody else." Under his skilful tutelage her views of public questions were transformed ; new standards taught her to approve the strange, flamboyant gestures of his policy ; and she was soon doing things that were not by any stretch of the imagination what Albert would have done. That inner oracle was almost silent now. There was no need for it to speak, because she had a living guide to walk beside her and direct the reign towards new destinies. The transformation was complete ; and under the magician's wand his sovereign had become Victoria III.

That monarch was completely different from both her predecessors—as different as Lord Beaconsfield in all his pride from Melbourne's homeliness or the austerity of Peel. She was an Empress now ; and the stage was set by an accomplished hand for an imperial display. It was a splendid transformation-scene, in which iridescent tableaux succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity. The Sikhs

came to Malta ; the fleet went to Besika Bay ; Lord Beaconsfield alighted in Berlin, made a few mystic passes, and returned to Charing Cross with his splendid freight of "Peace with Honour" ; and in the final scene, as deep-chested vocalists in music-halls roared that they did not want to fight but, by jingo, if they did, a lonely figure on a gilded throne sat high above the din, savouring an Empire's acclamation. After the long, dreary years of her retirement it was a new sensation. For a touch of novelty was needed, if the melancholy charm of her eternal mourning was ever to be broken ; and a skilful minister applied the magic touch. He even found her a new title. Monarchs have often raised their ministers a step in the peerage ; but what minister before Disraeli bestowed a step in the monarchy upon his sovereign ? The Queen became Queen-Empress ; and a deeper change came with the change of style. For now she learned to recognise herself in a fresh character ; and the modest outlines of V. R. soon vanished in the new magnificence of V. R. I.

The change was more than titular, since it marked the Queen's transition to her third and final manner. That incarnation was, perhaps, her last. Disraeli's Queen reigned on, ageing a little with the years, until the roaring streets acclaimed her Jubilee and, in a few years more, a silent gun-carriage passed by under the grey light of 1901. But almost to the end her loyalties remained the loyalties of 1878—her throne, her Empire, the fighting services, a spirited foreign policy, and a strong distaste for Radicals. For a skilled hand had moulded her in his own image ; and Disraeli's handiwork was largely undisturbed by his successors. The consequences of the change in her were no less devastating than the results of earlier transformations ; and the full impact of the blow fell upon Mr. Gladstone. For the Queen, from whose service he retired in 1874, had completely vanished. That sovereign had lived on terms of friendship with him, fussed about his health, shared some of his ideals, and exchanged small, improving presents. Six years passed

over them ; and he returned to find a changed woman, who surveyed him with a stony stare and conveyed a silent hope that he would act as much as possible like dear Lord Beaconsfield. It was most disconcerting. Nothing in his previous experience at Court had taught him to regard Disraeli as a model of statesmanship. The Prince Consort emphatically would not have thought so ; neither did Sir Robert Peel ; and Mr. Gladstone stared about a little helplessly to find familiar landmarks. But they had vanished once again ; and Gladstone in 1880 was almost as lost as Palmerston in 1846. Palmerston, indeed, would have been more at home in the new Court, since Lord Beaconsfield's achievement had been very largely modelled on the freer gestures of Palmerstonian foreign policy at its livelier (and less effective) moments. But Mr. Gladstone was condemned to wander, an embarrassed *revenant* from the reign of Victoria II, down lengthening corridors of exasperation in the uncongenial company of Victoria III.

That substitution of a strange sovereign for the Queen whom he had served from 1868 to 1874 explains the deepening embarrassment that followed in 1880 ; and recognition of the change in her is the key to any grasp of their relation.

## 3

Not that Mr. Gladstone was immune from change. That long career, whose opening was shadowed by Mr. Canning, its middle years a sober pacing by the side of Peel, a brush with Palmerston and a tournament with Disraeli, and its ending an unquiet evening with a sun that obstinately declined to set at the bidding of impatient Unionist evening stars—that black-coated pageant marching from the reign of George IV to the Diamond Jubilee—contained more than a single figure. For there was emphatically more than one Mr. Gladstone ; and his progress through the Nineteenth Century was far more diversified than the mere repetition of one figure in an interminable frieze. The frieze was long

indeed ; but as the passing years wrought changes in him, the recurring figure that bore the name of Gladstone was rarely twice the same.

The long procession opened with a demure Oxonian, whose fame had reached as far as Cheyne Row ; Carlyle uttered a deep, respectful growl about " a certain W. Gladstone, an Oxford crack scholar, Tory M.P., and devout churchman of great talent and hope. . . . I know him for a solid, serious, silent-minded man " ; Macaulay honoured his early writings with a full, critical broadside in the *Edinburgh*, opening the cannonade with a rare compliment to " the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories " ; and their unbending leader closed an interview, in which he offered him a minor post, by taking Gladstone's hand and saying with deep feeling, " Well, God bless you, wherever you are." Peel was not prodigal of such demonstrations ; but his response to Gladstone was immediate. Did not someone say of the young man that he was " Oxford on the surface, but Liverpool below " ? If so, Sir Robert could respect the industrious commercial statesmanship, that knew how to " govern packages " at the Board of Trade, beneath the impressive superstructure of academic decorum.

That was the first Mr. Gladstone, a rather solemn figure with black hair and an adorable young wife, who lived in Carlton House Terrace in order to be near the House of Commons and the Sunday school in which he taught, served on Church committees, and ordered books for the servants' library with immense deliberation. How could Sir Robert fail to like him, or he to follow Peel ? He followed him through the inevitable curve, as Peel veered towards Free Trade ; and when the angry Tories hunted their leaders out of office, he shared their exile. It was a rather lonely destiny to be a Peelite. The rôle was dignified ; but it consisted mainly of surveying politics from an unfrequented pinnacle of superior sagacity ; and as the little group looked down, the crowded plain beneath them filled with the stamp

and thunder of opposing Whigs and Tories. Such detachment might be congenial to Aberdeen ; but Mr. Gladstone was not born to be a political Mercutio. A critic said of him that he was an ardent Italian in the custody of a Scotsman. The Scotsman was still uppermost ; but as the sounds of conflict floated up to their Olympian retreat, something was stirring in him that threatened to unseat his inner Scotsman and disturb the prim decorum of a Peelite. An accident of foreign travel made him aware of dark misdeeds in Italy ; and he returned to England with an uncomfortable certainty that the reigning house of Naples constituted " the negation of God erected into a system of Government." This was unfortunate, as such opinions were normally confined to Palmerston. For the reproof of Continental tyranny had been a lively speciality of his for years ; and the more decorous Conservatives were accustomed to receive his comminations with grave disapproval. But Mr. Gladstone could talk of nothing else. Something had fired his indignation ; the judicious Scotsman, who normally held him in control, swayed on his throne ; and as his indignation burned, there were traces of another, a far livelier Mr. Gladstone. For he was almost impetuous, shocked Aberdeen by publishing his feelings in a pamphlet, and called on Palmerston to assure him that " the Neapolitan is a *Governo infernale*, and that, as a gentleman and a Christian, he feels it his duty to make known what he has seen of its proceedings." This outburst was not without its influence on Gladstone's political alignment, since it brought him closer to Palmerston. But its significance was deeper as a revelation of the fires that burnt within him, of a capacity for deep emotion in noble causes that lay concealed beneath that somewhat prim exterior. Here was a second Mr. Gladstone, neither Oxford nor Liverpool, with passions that might lie far beyond the control of any Scotsman.

But for the moment that volcanic figure was in abeyance. The judicious Peelite still went about his business with eyes

demurely fixed upon the ground of public finance. A sober figure, he was in complete conformity with the prevailing background. It was an age of lofty principles; and Mr. Gladstone's, whether of financial probity or of Church government, were as high as could have been desired. Was he not Sir Robert's favourite pupil and an honoured friend of the Prince Consort? For a short term of office he showed his quality as Chancellor of the Exchequer, displaying faultless theory in admirable practice. But it was cut short by a Peelite crotchet; and he withdrew once more to contemplate the drift of parties from his lonely pillar in the political Thebaid.

His contemplation ended in the most unlikely manner, since he returned to earth at the invitation of Lord Palmerston. Less than half a Tory now, he was uncomfortably poised between two parties, each of which seemed almost equally distasteful. It was impossible for a devoted Peelite to re-enlist among the Tories. True, they had seen the error of their fiscal ways and shed the shibboleth of Protection; but he could scarcely serve behind, or even beside, Disraeli, who had been Peel's political assassin. Would it be easier for him to join the Whigs and follow Palmerston? It hardly seemed so, as a judicious intimate of Gladstone's recorded that "personal dislike and distrust of Palmerston is the one absorbing feeling with him," and he confessed himself "that on the whole perhaps I differ more from Lord Palmerston than from almost anyone, and this was more on account of his temper and views of public conduct, than of any political opinions." This was unpromising; and Gladstone, balancing between his strong distastes, seemed doomed to sit for ever on his pillar, an anchorite of politics. But something altered his perspective. The chance acceptance of a temporary mission sent him to Greece; and when he returned, a close observer noted that "foreign politics seemed to have the chief place in his mind." Foreign politics in 1859 might well assist him to make a choice between the parties. They were the test question, since



the armies were converging for the war of Italian independence, and Gladstone's sympathies were deeply engaged upon the side of Italy. (Had he not dined with Cavour on his way home from Corfu?) One party must seem less distasteful now, since the Tory prejudice for Austria was palpably wrong-headed, while Palmerston with all his faults took a right view of Italy. Searching his motives, Gladstone discovered "real and close harmony of sentiment" with Palmerston and Russell; and, as he wrote, "the overwhelming interest and weight of the Italian question, and of our foreign policy in connection with it, joined to my entire mistrust of the former Government in relation to it," made him a Liberal at forty-nine.

Not that he was a Palmerstonian. For the strange record of their partnership was an uncomfortable story, of which a rueful private secretary wrote that "it was a constant source of sorrow to me, and a perpetual cause of mystery, to note how they misunderstood one another, and how evidently each mistrusted the other, though perfectly cordial and most friendly in their mutual intercourse." They fought with vigour upon Reform and armaments; Lord Palmerston's insatiable appetite for iron ships and coast defences was a constant source of anguish to his Chancellor; and the Cabinets on departmental Estimates were an annually recurring battlefield piled high with slaughtered memoranda. It sometimes seemed to the Prime Minister that his formidable recruit from Toryism was more than half a Radical; and the old man was heard to mutter that "Gladstone will soon have it all his own way; and whenever he gets my place, we shall have strange doings."

But the Queen was quite untouched by these misgivings. Gladstone was still, for her, an eminently sympathetic figure, a welcome reminder of "our valuable Peel," a sober epitome of all that was most high-minded in public life. She had outgrown her early weakness for experienced and slightly raffish old gentlemen; Disraeli had not yet implanted a taste for the baroque; and Mr. Gladstone, with his judicious

views and cultivated tastes, was in perfect harmony with the prevailing atmosphere at Court. His correspondence with Prince Albert was a respectful interchange of extracts from the duller Continental periodicals ; his recreations, if one might judge from his contributions to the magazines, lay in the blameless fields of Church discipline and the dead languages ; and his political opinions were gratifyingly free from those spirited initiatives in foreign policy, which made life with Lord Palmerston so breathless. There was no need to fear that Mr. Gladstone would be dashing. He had his views, of course ; but they were always decorously expressed, and there was not much to show that they represented any dangerous advance upon Sir Robert Peel's. This was most reassuring ; and to all appearances his sovereign might look forward to a sedate and comfortable future with Mr. Gladstone.

When the Prince Consort died, a close observer of the Queen reported to Gladstone that " of all her Ministers she seemed to me to think that you had most entered into her feelings, and she dwelt especially upon the manner in which you had parted from her." This was highly promising ; and if Mr. Gladstone could maintain his early form, there was no reason in the world why he should not remain a royal favourite. But changes, quite unnoticed by the Queen, were working in him ; for Mr. Gladstone was still growing. That decorous exterior remained the same ; but the Oxonian in him was gradually replaced by a more lively figure. Although his origins were Tory, his private sympathies inclined him to the Radicals. For Gladstone never learned to be a Whig ; his eager mind was too alert for that. When he joined Palmerston in the strange amalgam of Whigs, Radicals, and Peelites, out of which that wary veteran forged the Liberal Party, Gladstone's inclinations lay all towards the Left, since he informed his brother that he was " exceedingly sorry to find that Cobden does not take office," but " very glad we have Gibson." That was significant ; his future, if such inclinations were pursued, would lead him

into more exciting company than the Prince Consort and his colleagues, since Radicals refreshed themselves with deep draughts of heartening applause in popular assemblies. Mass-meetings were still something of a novelty ; but Bright and Cobden had changed the economic face of England a dozen years before on the platforms of the Anti-Corn-Law League ; and Mr. Gladstone, an apt pupil, showed no disinclination for these novel exercises. His Northern tour in 1862 was a new kind of triumph for him. Accustomed to the decorous applause that greets a Budget speech, followed by the discreet congratulations of fellow-members and a highly gratifying letter from the Prince, he faced the headier delights of vast popular receptions—the roaring streets, the thunder of salutes, the flags, the bells, the crowding faces, and the endless speech-making. A local poet toasted the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a lyric which proclaimed :

“ Honour give to sterling worth,  
Genius better is than birth,  
So here's success to Gladstone.”

And as all Tyneside roared its gratitude, the hero, dazed but happy, responded in unnumbered speeches. (One of them, indeed, contained a slight lapse from his customary standard of discretion in its announcement on the Civil War beyond the Atlantic that “ there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army ; they are making, it appears, a navy ; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation.”) The echoes died away ; but a more lasting consequence remained. For the triumphant Chancellor, whose burning eyes and rolling sentences were admirably fitted to the platform, had found a wider audience than he had ever known. Beyond the House of Commons he could see the people of England, ranged and attentive, waiting for him to speak to them ; his sympathy reached out towards the listening masses ; and in the process Mr. Gladstone found his voice.

The change was working in him through the last years of his uneasy partnership with Palmerston. Now the Oxonian was quite submerged by something livelier. Gladstone was growing up; his aged leader termed him "a dangerous man"; and when Oxford repudiated her unworthy son, his deep voice informed the Free Trade Hall at Manchester: "At last, my friends, I am come among you unmuzzled." Here was a new Mr. Gladstone, in whose impressive lineaments it was not easy to detect the paler classicism of his old features. There was no lack of dignity; few public men moved with a more majestic tread; but somehow there was less repose about him. The ardent Italian was getting restive, and his restraining Scotsman was rarely in evidence, although a trace of him still lingered in a lasting taste for fine-spun dialectic. But the guarded Peelite utterance had been quite discarded, and a tendency to eloquence grew on him steadily. He was to be found, a pale, bare-headed figure in the light of an October afternoon, erect and voluble at the centre of a vast, swaying crowd at Blackheath—strange company for a Prime Minister, and with an awkward tendency to shout him down. But as the deep tones rose and fell above their heads, the scattered voices of his interrupters died away; and for an hour and fifty minutes the hearers were regaled with a reasoned discourse on administrative economy, on education, vote by ballot, and the recruitment of the Civil Service. When he reached his half-way house and the small receptacle familiar to two generations of his listeners rose to the speaker's lips, a voice in front bawled out a gay request to the Prime Minister to "give us some." "Yes," he rejoined a little grimly, "you would want some if you had to do what I have." But there were few concessions to frivolity or ignorance in Mr. Gladstone's audiences. For it was assumed that if they chose to stand there in the rising mist, they desired to be informed of public questions to the best of his ability. He was prepared to spend a good deal of his time in this arduous form of popular education; and in the process, though he was almost

innocent of the pursuit of popularity, he became "the People's William."

This formidable figure was Prime Minister for six fruitful years, for the first three of which he gave almost unfailing satisfaction to his sovereign. Their harmony from 1868 to 1871 was notable and rarely interrupted. It was too much to hope that their opinions should coincide on every question; but Mr. Gladstone's were invariably stated with profound respect; and the Queen showed herself a ready instrument of conciliation between ministers and the unwilling objects of their various reforms. It was a season of some difficulty for her, since her health was troublesome and public duties had grown slightly uncongenial after the long retirement of her protracted mourning. The Prime Minister appeared inevitably in the unwelcome guise of a call to duty, of his sovereign's reluctant interrupter breaking in upon her melancholy Capua on Deeside or the Solent; but his tact preserved their harmony, and there was no breach between them before 1871. That summer the situation was a little delicate, as he was particularly anxious that her departure for Balmoral should be delayed a week or so. For there had been some public criticism of the Throne, which he was anxious to disarm. But she was over-tired, and after a crowded summer the escape to Scotland gleamed like a Promised Land before her. So she went North against his wish; and the unhappy episode rose like a wall between them.

A graver incident raised it to greater heights. For in 1872 Gladstone's sense of public duty impelled him to a protracted argument upon the desirability of employing the Prince of Wales at Dublin and of transferring some portion of his mother's social duties to the young couple at Marlborough House. The Queen disapproved completely; and the discussion gravely modified her attitude to Gladstone. Then in the normal course of party politics he went out of office; and his deft successor wrought further changes in her, while Mr. Gladstone passed from her life into the shades

of Opposition and vanished finally (it seemed) into the still deeper shadows of retirement. For Gladstone always had a tendency to ring down the curtain on his long career. Announcing gravely at thirty-three that he was getting near "the *mezzo del cammin*," he had proclaimed in hollow tones that "my years glide away. It is time to look forward to the close." That had been in 1842. Now it was 1874, and he was nearly sixty-five—far older than Sir Robert Peel had ever been. A craving for "an interval between parliament and the grave" assailed him; and he composed himself for rest—for rest, that is to say, according to his own somewhat exacting notions, which comprised a spell of Continental travel, Homeric scholarship, irregular attendance at the House of Commons, together with a wealth of ecclesiastical controversy. Accordingly he shed the Liberal leadership. His leave-taking from the Queen was formal in a letter which assured her that "Mr. Gladstone, perhaps for the last time, submits his humble duty," and in spite of his new independence would be in his place in Parliament "so often as any case shall occur which shall touch either your Majesty personally or the Royal Family, or the interests of the Throne." His loyalty was suitably acknowledged in the Queen's avowal that "she knows that his zeal & untiring energy have always been exerted with the desire of advancing the welfare of the Nation & maintaining the honor of the Crown, and she thanks him for his loyal assurances of support on all occasions when it may become necessary." These formalities duly completed and the party leadership transmitted to his successor, he withdrew to the vigorous exercises of his retirement.

Not that his interest in public life abated. Indeed, his disapproval of Disraeli seemed to increase with his detachment, and a white heat of passion frequently informed his occasional interventions in debate, of one of which the bland Prime Minister recorded "Gladstone . . . being all the night in one of his white rages and glancing looks at me, which would have annihilated any man who had not a good

majority and a determination to use it." Then he returned to Hawarden and the silence and his books. But the silence was anything but unbroken ; and sounds drifted in through Mr. Gladstone's study window, by which his rest was sadly interrupted. It was almost impossible, he found, to concentrate upon theology under a Tory Government. For how could he continue his agreeable task of annotation on the fascinating theme of " Future Retribution " with the Near East in flames ? His notes were promptly laid aside ; lumbago was defied ; and he sat up in bed to write a scarifying pamphlet on *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*. It was a quarter of a century since foreign suffering had moved him to a memorable onslaught on the King of Naples ; and once more oppression roused Mr. Gladstone. This time it was the Turks ; and as his passion mounted to a *crescendo*, he implored his countrymen to fling them out of Europe :

" Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned."

The lonely voice rang out from Hawarden, filled the country, and reverberated in the House of Commons, until the thunder of its echoes came back from crowded meetings in Midlothian, where Mr. Gladstone forced a way through lanes of cheering Scotsmen to denounce the Government and all its works. Now he was close on seventy, still gnawed by fear that " health and strength would be unequal to the strain at my time of life " and praying " that I may escape into retirement." But rest was not for Mr. Gladstone whilst he could see—or thought he saw—injustice in high places. The interlude among his books had merely given him new strength ; and, like his Queen, those years had brought him to his final phase. He took the field again, a venerable

figure now with a new freedom in his gait. The prim Oxonian, the judicious Peelite, and the cautious Liberal had all vanished ; and in place of them his startled sovereign and his cheering countrymen beheld " the Grand Old Man," half Major Prophet and half force of nature, as he thundered and lightened unforgettably and swept back to office on the shoulders of Midlothian.



## II

### CONVERGENCE

THERE is sometimes a significance about first meetings ; but theirs was quite without it. For one summer day in 1837 the Oxford address upon the Queen's accession was presented at St. James's Palace by Mr. Gladstone, of Christ Church, who had been Under-Secretary for the Colonies in Sir Robert Peel's administration. But though both parties were indefatigable diarists, neither of them paused to describe the meeting, his journal giving the bare fact—"Went up with the Oxford Address. An interesting occasion"—and the Queen recording merely that the ceremonial was well attended, the room intensely hot, her Garter mantle of blue velvet lined with white silk, and Lord Melbourne's reading of her Speech distinguished by so much good feeling—but not a word of Mr. Gladstone.

They did not meet again until he went to Claremont four years later to be sworn of her Privy Council. That was a trying day for her, as she had just parted from her first and friendliest Prime Minister, receiving "the last letter which Lord Melbourne will send in a box," and it was to usher in the unknown in the chilly person of Sir Robert Peel and his Tory colleagues. Small wonder that she was a little flushed ; even Mr. Gladstone, the new Vice-President of the Board of Trade, noticed how she sat at the head of the long Council table, "composed but dejected," and felt quite sorry for her. But she was calm enough to rectify an error of Charles Greville's ; and her voice was clear, as she read out the Order in Council appointing Mr. Gladstone. He kissed her hand, walked through the ritual of oaths and genuflexions, and got a handshake from Prince Albert ; then they all went off

except the Duke of Wellington, who stayed behind to speak to her for a few minutes.

Those were the remote surroundings of their early meetings, when Prince Albert was a bridegroom and before the Queen was a young mother. Lord Melbourne's memory still hung regretted on the Palace air, as the smooth, dark head of Mr. Gladstone knelt before her and their long association opened—that prolonged duet that lasted until almost yesterday. It seems to open in the very dawn of time. For he was a colleague of the Duke of Wellington; even his departmental chief had been Prime Minister to George IV; and the young apprentice was himself an office-holder of King William's reign. Not that his slight seniority had any power to arm him with assurance, as he approached his sovereign's young presence. For when he dined at the Palace early in the next year, his diary confessed that Mr. Gladstone "dreaded personal introduction to the Queen, in the same way as at the different earlier stages of his pilgrimage to my Head Master at school, and to the Duke of Newcastle when in 1832 I first went to Newark." But he was not too shy to notice and "lament the absence of a Chaplain, or even grace at Palace dinners: I wonder in whose reign this began. Perhaps she will some day supply the omission. Even in the eternal sense Majesty never can be perfect, never can put on its most august aspect, without religion." For his piety deplored the last traces of the Regency and strained eagerly towards the purer air of a sweeter, simpler reign.

But he saw nothing more of her until he went to Windsor in the first days of 1845. This time the royal babies were produced to shake his hand; and Majesty was pleased to say that Mrs. Gladstone would think them dwarfs next to her own. The evening was exciting, as after dinner they sat down to cards. That was embarrassing, as the cautious Gladstone had locked up his purse before coming down to dine; but happily he was not called upon to pay, since he won nearly half-a-crown and positively collected eightpence of his winnings from the Prince himself—"I mean to keep

the 2*d.* piece (the 6*d.* I cannot identify) accordingly, unless I lose it again to-night." The evening ended with "rather a nice conversation" with Prince Albert upon the rousing theme of an Anglo-Prussian copyright convention. But when the happy guest walked off to bed, the triumph of his evening was a little dimmed by a tactless intimation from the Groom of the Chambers that the knee of his Court suit had split, which left him wondering uneasily if it had been in this unhappy state throughout the royal entertainment.

Their next encounter was official, when he resigned from office three weeks later upon a point of Church government which his conscience found troublesome. His explanation to the House of Commons left Cobden mystified, but full of admiration, murmuring: "What a marvellous talent is this—here have I been sitting listening with pleasure for an hour to his explanation, and yet I know no more why he left the Government than before he began." But the Queen was spared these subtleties, since he confined himself to an expression of regret and of gratitude for royal kindness; then she said something about the gratifying diminution of Chartism, asked after Mrs. Gladstone, and closed the audience.

He was soon back in office, though, when Peel, a convert to Free Trade, assembled his supporters in a Cabinet to end the Corn Laws and made Gladstone his Colonial Secretary.

Secretary of State, he had now the duty of writing to his sovereign upon Colonial Office business; and for the first time "Mr. William Gladstone presents his humble duty to the Queen" in the last week of 1845, with a proposal that Lord Fitzroy Somerset should go to Canada as Governor-General. He had enquired of Wellington about the appointment; and his formidable colleague devoted part of Christmas Day to the composition of an impressive testimonial to his invaluable military factotum. That veteran had served him "during the whole of the late War in the Peninsula; and in Flanders"; his services were still of value at the Horse Guards; but if he were required elsewhere, the Duke

would be responsible for everything and "secure the performance of the duty in such manner as to satisfy Her Majesty's Servants and to secure the Publick Interests." For it had never been his way at any time in the last forty years to make difficulties about a little extra work; and Wellington, at seventy-six, was quite prepared to oblige young Secretary Gladstone. Two ages seem to meet in that exchange of letters; for one correspondent had seen active service against the armies of the First Republic, and the other lived on until Sir Herbert Kitchener was campaigning in the Sudan. Indeed, Gladstone's official correspondence seemed full of military interest, since it fell to him to ask royal leave for the Park guns to fire in honour of Gough's victories in the Sikh War. He had been at Windsor for New Year, 1846, when the Queen encored a song by the Castle servants; the royal children were on view once more, and he found the Prince of Wales "as good in expression as can be conceived." Then there were decorations to be sanctioned for a naval officer, who had commanded the blockade of Buenos Aires, where the cold tyranny of Rosas defied the Powers, and more guns to boom for Indian victories; but sometimes his royal correspondence touched the more congenial theme of Colonial bishoprics and the benefactions of the good Miss Burdett Coutts.

But all through 1846 the Tory wolves were after Peel; and in June they dragged him down. One by one his colleagues had their audiences of the Queen to give up their seals of office, Gladstone recording how she said something gracious about his father and took his seals with a kindly intimation that she was very sorry to receive them from him. He was quite sorry for her too, because "her eyes told tales but she smiled and put on a cheerful countenance." For, as he saw, it cost her a good deal to part with the Peelites: "it was in fact the 1st of September, 1841, over again as to feelings." But this time the parting was not from the genial tutelage of Melbourne, but from Peel's incomparable judgment and the sagacity of Aberdeen, both of which she

had learnt to value. Small wonder that she moved reluctantly towards a dark future with the Whigs, in which the uncertain temper of John Russell was only one degree less uncongenial than Palmerston's ill-timed vivacity. For her tastes were formed ; her first repugnance overcome, she had learnt how to work with Peel and his disciples ; Albert could collaborate with them in a happy interchange of memoranda ; and it was anything but certain how far Lord Palmerston would prove a well-conducted pupil in that school. So Mr. Gladstone and the Peelites went out in 1846, followed by their sovereign's regretful eyes. While they watched the course of party politics from their distinguished isolation, he took steps to keep alive his friendship with Prince Albert by a gift of his latest publication—two volumes on *The Roman State, from 1815 to 1850*, translated from the Italian—gratefully acknowledged, added to the royal library, and to be perused by its harassed recipient "when his time is less occupied than it is at present." A third volume followed in the next year. His more inflammatory writings on the state of Naples were not, it seems, despatched to the same destination.

But such pursuits were laid aside once more in 1852, when Aberdeen returned to office at the head of an inclusive Coalition. The Whigs persisted ; but there was room for hope that Palmerston would prove less trying at the Home Office ; and, with Graham at the Admiralty, Sidney Herbert at the War Office, and Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer, there would be a gratifying recurrence of the Peelites. This comforted the Queen as the Peelites were eminently reliable ; besides, the Palace had a high opinion of Mr. Gladstone. Had not the Prince suggested to Lord Derby that the unruly Tories in the House of Commons, of whom the Peelite wing excusably refused to sit behind Disraeli, might serve under Gladstone ? True, Derby had replied that Gladstone was quite unfit for leadership because he lacked decision, boldness, readiness, and clearness ; besides, he was not prepared to sacrifice Disraeli. But Prince Albert's nomination of

Mr. Gladstone for the Tory leadership in 1852 was plainly indicative of royal favour ; and when Aberdeen was hesitating between two names for Chancellor of the Exchequer, the royal preference for Gladstone was decisive :

“ Lord Aberdeen wavered between Sir J. Graham and Mr. Gladstone. . . . Lord John wished Sir James as Chancellor of the Exchequer. We argued the greater capabilities of Sir James for the Administration of the Colonies, and Mr. Gladstone for the Finances.

“ *Chancellor of the Exchequer*—therefore, Mr. Gladstone.”

It was quite evident that Gladstone as Chancellor was almost a royal choice. For if “ our valuable Peel ” was gone, his favourite pupil still remained.

His first official acts were watched by the same kindly eyes. He had a lengthy audience to expound the Budget of 1853 to Prince Albert ; and when it was introduced, John Russell’s praise of him (“ . . . one of the most powerful financial speeches ever made in the House of Commons. Mr. Pitt in the days of his glory might have been more imposing, but he could not have been more persuasive ”) was forwarded with royal thoughtfulness for him to read, Prince Albert adding gaily that he trusted Mr. Gladstone’s Christian humility would not allow him to become dangerously elated. The Prince was even jocular, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer submitted patterns of a new coinage for Australia, upon which the royal brow receded slightly—“ the Medallist has deprived H.M. of part of her intellect by making her forehead excessively flat and retreating.” They corresponded freely on Prince Albert’s favourite plans for a more systematic rearrangement of the capital by concentrating all the learned Societies in a splendid home near Hyde Park Corner and depositing the National Gallery at Kensington. A burst of princely humour hinted that Burlington House would make admirable barracks ; but when Mr. Gladstone responded gravely with three numbered reasons to the contrary, Prince Albert was forced to explain that his

suggestion had been a joke. It is humiliating even for commoners to explain a joke ; but it was not always safe to joke with Mr. Gladstone.

He was a frequent guest at Court where the Queen was invariably gracious and he had "a go upon Reform and the Crown Estates with the Prince." There was not the least constraint, and he found the sovereign "above all so thoroughly natural." But his views were not always to the royal taste, a proposal to recruit the lower grades of the Civil Service by competitive examination appearing to the Queen to involve immense and irretrievable changes. Two memoranda and an audience were needed, before the royal sanction was conceded, "altho' not without considerable misgivings." But he was still in friendly correspondence with the Prince, abetting his designs for buying sound Italian pictures for the national collection.

As 1854 advanced, the eastern sky was darkened by the clouds of war, and Lord Aberdeen's unwarlike Coalition ran into heavy weather. After an uncomfortable interlude of resignations Lord Palmerston took office to the Queen's profound dismay. But it was some consolation to his anxious sovereign that the new Prime Minister invited the Peelite cohort to stay in the Cabinet. They hesitated ; but their hesitations were ended by the diplomacy of their own leader. For the Prince himself had positively asked Lord Aberdeen to induce Gladstone, Herbert, and Graham to serve in the new Government ; and after a becoming interval of coyness they complied. Their services were highly valued by the Queen, if less highly by the Prime Minister ; and she reported hopefully to King Leopold at Brussels that, in spite of Palmerston's disturbing advent, their inclusion "would be very important, and would tend to allay the *alarm* which his name will, I fear, produce abroad."

So Gladstone was still Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1855 ; but not for long. Before a month was fairly out, the Peelite consciences were troubled once again upon a Parliamentary point. For they were profoundly shocked

by the Prime Minister's consent to a Select Committee on the war; Prince Albert felt the same, comparing Mr. Roebuck's Committee to the revolutionary Convention of 1793; and the Queen hoped loudly that she should not be given over to "those who are the least fit to govern." But Palmerston, having attained the pinnacle of office, was disinclined to try conclusions with the House of Commons unnecessarily just to please the Peelites. The Cabinet was hopelessly divided; and an anxious note summoned Gladstone to the Palace before the final meeting. He had a conversation with the Prince, in which the Chancellor was pressed with flattering insistence to stay in office. But the royal prayers were unavailing, and the Peelites resigned. Gladstone's audience on leaving office was prolonged and friendly. He had already assured Prince Albert that his first consideration was the position of the Crown; and he repeated this admirable sentiment to the Queen. They shook their heads together over a disturbing prospect of weak Governments (a polite expression, it may be conjectured, for Lord Palmerston). "She observed that the prospect is not agreeable. I said, True, madam, but it is a great consolation that all these troubles are upon the surface, and that the throne has for a long time been gaining and not losing stability from year to year. I could see but one danger to the throne, and that was from encroachments by the House of Commons." And upon this blameless sentiment they parted.

The parting was prolonged, since Palmerston surprised them all by being anything but weak. That wary, active, shrewd, industrious old man, whom optimistic rivals had regarded as a harmless dotard, flourished amazingly upon the bitter herbs of office in war-time. His courage brought the nation through the black winter of 1855; and when the war was over, it was found that he had been promoted in his countrymen's regard from a war-time expedient to the unquestioned status of a national institution. Even the Palace, where his advent had been observed with uncon-



ceased alarm, was almost reconciled ; Stockmar told someone that the Queen disliked him less, and the Prime Minister took quite a pride in having overcome the royal prejudice against him. " The Queen," as a sardonic colleague wrote, " must . . . not persist in thinking him the Palmerston of old. He has put off the old man and has become a babe of grace." While this happy transformation-scene proceeded, Mr. Gladstone wandered on the misty shores of politics, a disembodied spirit without prospects upon either bank. The cheerful militancy of Lord Palmerston repelled him powerfully, and he ranged himself among the advocates of peace. That drift, if he pursued it, would align him with the Radicals ; but another tendency seemed to correct it, since the Tories angled assiduously for their straying brother, and there were moments in his private dealings with their leader Derby, when the Peelite brand seemed positively on the point of being snatched from the burning. His distaste for Palmerston was quite unconquerable : " I can neither give even the most qualified adhesion to the ministry of Lord Palmerston, nor follow the Liberal Party in the abandonment of the very principles and pledges which were original and principal bonds of union with it "—and if he acted on such feelings, he must inevitably find himself in active co-operation with the Tories. But his Peelite scruples still barred the way to Tory reunion, and he paused disconsolately between the parties. It was an uncomfortable interlude, in which opinion with its customary impatience of fine shades was more than a little inclined to dismiss Mr. Gladstone as a distinctly unreliable character. Indeed, a superficial observer might have been excused in 1857 for regarding his career as a sad instance of early promise blighted by later misadventure ; for there was something highly disconcerting in the spectacle of Peel's brilliant young colleague hovering so inconclusively above Radicals and Tories, an *ignis fatuus* of politics. It is a sobering reflection that for some years the general view of Mr. Gladstone was that he was flighty.

These somewhat incoherent activities of a politician out of place were conducted at a becoming distance from the Court, though he was still occasionally to be met at an official dinner. But the rich convolutions of his *Odyssey* scarcely multiplied his contacts with the Queen, who had learnt once again the recurring lesson of her reign, that the most admirable ministers are rarely indispensable. For she had learnt to live without Lord M.; life had been quite endurable without "our valuable Peel"; no catastrophe had followed the departure of "our excellent Aberdeen"; and now she felt quite anxious when Lord Palmerston's precarious majority was threatened by the Opposition. So Mr. Gladstone was left to his uncertainties, pleasantly relieved by Homer and contributions to the magazines on learned subjects and the marriage laws. Politically he was quite in a backwater now, disparagingly labelled as the finest speaker and the weakest man in the House of Commons. For he bore that reputation for an ability to think, which is so often fatal to political careers; and Tory journalists remarked with condescension on the hopeless ineptitude of "cerebral natures" for the arts of government. "Men of mere intellect," they wrote with Gladstone in their minds, were ill-fitted for affairs compared with Disraeli, since (unlike that zealot) they were "without moral passion." Such was the strange inversion of that pair of reputations in 1857—Disraeli ablaze with moral passion, and Gladstone steering by the cold light of intellect.

Not that the Tories dismissed him quite so lightly, since Lord Derby asked Gladstone to take office with them when they tripped up Palmerston in 1858. The invitation was repeated with a charming offer by Disraeli to transfer the Commons leadership to a Peelite veteran under whom both he and Gladstone might (it was hoped) serve without embarrassment. But the twig was limed in vain; both invitations were declined; and the anchorite retained his solitary lodge in the wilderness of politics. That year, however, he was induced to leave it for a brief interval. A

romantic novelist, imperfectly disguised as Secretary for the Colonies, adopted a romantic notion; and Bulwer Lytton invited Gladstone to sail for the Ionian Islands as Her Majesty's Special Commissioner—a British Odysseus outward-bound for Ithaca. The islands were a slightly troublesome inheritance from the peace-settlement of 1815, which the rising temper of Greek nationalism did not make it any easier to govern. There was incessant local trouble, which refused to yield to the simple-minded solvent of a little flogging. It rapidly became apparent that something must be done to satisfy the Greeks, and that someone must go out and do it. Mr. Gladstone, as all readers of the monthly magazines were well aware, knew Greek. True, his acquaintance with it was confined to the Epic dialect of Homer; but as the Corfiotes largely talked Italian, that would not greatly matter. Besides, he was a Philhellene—not quite, perhaps, of the same pattern as Lord Byron, but still a Philhellene. If he went out, the Greeks would be profoundly gratified; and, what was more, the appointment might draw him a step nearer to the Tories. So he was asked with due precautions; and with a rich sufficiency of safeguards he accepted. The Queen approved; and when local complications impelled him to assume the further office of High Commissioner, a royal letter conveyed her satisfaction: “the Queen . . . gladly accepts his patriotic offer. He will have difficulty in solving a delicate question, affecting national feeling, against time, but his offer comes most opportunely.”

The work was admirably done (although he subsequently declined the guerdon of a G.C.M.G., raised later to a G.C.B.). He pronounced discourses in Italian, savoured cheers in Greek, and danced with Homeric vigour on the dancing-floors of Ithaca; he went to Athens in a cruiser, and he was most unfavourably impressed by Islam, when he encountered it in the course of a brief excursion to Albania. (Strange that the same phenomena, which had fired Disraeli's fancy for a lifetime, merely elicited from Mr. Gladstone's journal a

dejected exclamation that "the whole impression is saddening ; it is all indolence, decay, stagnation ; the image of God seems as it were nowhere. But there is much of wild and picturesque.") His task performed, he hurried home, leaving behind a reputation for Philhellenism (although he was not yet in favour of ceding the islands to the Greeks) which lasted him a lifetime and fructified a few years later in the magnificent, if wholly unofficial, proposal that Mr. Gladstone should become King of Greece.

The trip left traces on him, since it was his first experience of a misgoverned island—a species of which Mr. Gladstone was to see more, much more, before life ended. But the Irish Question was still some years ahead of him ; and the homeward journey had more influence on his immediate prospects than anything that he had seen at Corfu. For he travelled across Lombardy, where the long columns of Franz-Joseph's whitecoats were moving slowly into place. A war was brewing ; and at Milan and Vicenza Gladstone saw the Austrians standing stiffly to their arms. His sympathies were always strongly Italian, and a dinner with Cavour at Turin did nothing to reduce the warmth of his convictions. Small wonder that the Italian problem haunted the returned traveller to the exclusion of all others, and that his Tory sympathies were sharply checked by the party's Austrian proclivities. Now he was drifting rapidly towards the opposing quarter, where Palmerston and Russell with all their defects were strong for Italy. Here was a crux at last to which his logic knew the answer. For the object nearest to his eye was Italy ; and Mr. Gladstone made his final choice between the parties by the test of their respective Italian policies. To choose the Tories would align him with the Austrian oppressor ; to follow Palmerston would land him safely on the side of Italy—that Italy whose art, thought, institutions, history, and literature he adored, whose language was his pastime, whose dungeons had evoked his indignation in a form that Aberdeen found so embarrassing a few years earlier. Had not someone termed

him an Italian in the custody of a Scotsman? In 1859 the Italian broke loose; and while the Scotsman's attention was momentarily distracted, Gladstone made the most important choice of all his long career for the sake of Italy.

His choice was clear enough; but he moved towards it through a slight curve. For whilst he pressed the Opposition to turn out the Tory Government, some strange scruple impelled him to vote with the Government of which he disapproved. But that was the last Tory vote that Mr. Gladstone ever cast; and five weeks later he introduced a Budget as Lord Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer. His correspondence with the Crown resumed. The Prince Consort was soon sending him a print of his address before the British Association at Aberdeen; and Mr. Gladstone dined at Windsor to receive the Queen's positively Palmerstonian admonition that he "must prepare a large Budget." Prince and Chancellor exchanged instructive articles from the reviews, and Gladstone sent a copy of his own *Translations* for the sake of a version of Schiller, receiving in return a memorandum by the Crown Princess of Prussia translated by the Prince of Wales. A graceful gesture of the Prince promoted him to be an Elder Brother of the Trinity House; but their friendly intercourse was broken by the tragedy of 1861, which left the Queen a widow. She was profoundly touched by his condolence; a close witness of them both reported to him that she "saw how much you felt for her." His feelings were expressed in a public tribute, which elicited a letter of heart-breaking gratitude from Osborne. Her will still bore her up—"the Queen struggles & works—& *will* devote herself to *do* what her precious Husband wishes." (There is something harrowing in that present tense.) But her strength, she felt, would not be equal to the effort; and "Mrs. Gladstone who the Queen knows is a *most* tender wife—may—in a faint manner picture to herself what the Queen suffers." He replied with genuine emotion in terms which touched her once again; and his observant friend at Court wrote that "it must indeed be gratifying to you to have the

power, as you have the feeling, to give real consolation to such a person at such a season—and moreover it is of great importance to this country that there should be such a sympathy existing between you.”

It was indeed ; for Palmerston could not go on for ever. Russell was not much younger, and the succession would fall to Gladstone. If he was to be Prime Minister, her friendship was essential ; and he seemed quite assured of it. For she warned him thoughtfully against overwork and asked kindly after Mrs. Gladstone ; his audiences in 1863 were “ pleasant, even delightful ” and “ all as one could wish ” ; and they exchanged quotations from Guizot and Shelley. She seemed to enjoy his company ; and once, after he had dined with her at Balmoral, she positively felt that she had been more cheerful than was becoming to her mournful state. She spoke to him with perfect freedom of his colleagues and her anxieties about the Prince of Wales, and Mr. Gladstone showed himself a most respectful listener. He had his feelings, too, upon the subject of his aged leader, although no hint of their Cabinet dissensions on the fruitful theme of economy and national defence crept into his correspondence with the Queen. But perhaps the strong and growing sympathy between them owed something to a silent consciousness that on occasion they both disagreed with Palmerston. At any rate, the Queen felt no difficulty in speaking freely to him, as the *imbroglio* of Schleswig-Holstein developed its formidable complications. She spoke her mind, or rather the Prince Consort’s ; for, as Gladstone diagnosed, “ her recollections of the Prince’s sentiments ” were “ a barometer to govern her sympathies and affections.” This mood was on her, when she wrote to him that “ Germany is not ever likely to attack us—she who *ought* to be our *real* ally ! ” Such royal confidences showed plainly that she looked to Gladstone as a potential ally in her running fight with the Prime Minister ; and a gracious offer to lend Abergeldie to the Gladstones for the autumn of 1864 was a further sign of royal favour. Indeed, what higher proof could there

be of her deference to his Italian prejudices than the surprising fact that the Queen brought herself to speak "good-humouredly of Garibaldi" ?

Under these bright skies they sailed together through the last years of Palmerston's predominance. Her burden was so heavy now ; and the Prime Minister's vagaries, aided by his aged Foreign Secretary, made it no lighter. Palmerston and Russell were almost wholly indifferent, it seemed, to what Prince Albert would have done ; and she could scarcely bring herself to write to King Leopold about " the conduct of those two dreadful old men." But somehow Gladstone seemed different ; there was nothing in the official duties of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to bring him into unfriendly contact with the Crown ; and it was almost a testimonial to him, when Palmerston reported to the Queen that " Mr. Gladstone has been as troublesome and wrong-headed as he often is upon subjects discussed in Cabinet." Things might be easier, when she was left alone with Gladstone ; and when time removed Lord Palmerston, Lord Russell took his place with Gladstone at his elbow. He led the Commons now ; and the Queen wrote to tell him of " her gratification at the accounts she hears from all sides of the admirable manner in which he has commenced his Leadership in the House of Commons." His thanks were courtly ; and he showed himself extremely obliging about one of those public statements as to her children's duties, through which the path to her affections lay. When they were beaten on Reform in 1866, she was reluctant to take back the Tories, her Private Secretary informing Gladstone that she " considers it the bounden duty of her Ministers, in the present state of the Continent, not to abandon their posts, for she *knows* that it would be impossible at this moment to form another Government which could command the Public Confidence." But although she pressed them to inform the House of Commons that she hesitated to accept their resignation occasioned by defeat upon a matter of detail at a time of European crisis, they persisted in resigning. So the

Prussians marched to Sadowa, and the Government resigned. The final audience was "short but kind"; and Mr. Gladstone cleared up his papers at 11 Downing Street, and left the keys behind for his successor with an uncomfortable feeling that "somehow it makes a void."

The void was filled for him by a short bout of Continental travel. They went to Rome, where he was presented to the Pope, eliciting from *Pio Nono* the slightly enigmatic aphorism that he liked but did not understand Mr. Gladstone, both understood and liked Lord Clarendon, understood and disliked Cardwell, and neither liked nor understood Argyll. The void was filled for her by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the Queen recorded that Disraeli was "amiable and clever, but is a strange man." Her taste for strange men had not yet developed; for she still lived in the tradition of Prince Albert. Gladstone was asked down to dine and sleep at Windsor; and the gift of Mr. Martin's first volume of the Prince's *Life* marked her esteem. His thanks were eloquent; and the numerous erasures on the draft display his anxiety to please. But politics were brisk; the cauldron of Reform boiled cheerfully through 1867; Gladstone, Bright, and Lowe each thundered in his key; and Disraeli wrote off picturesque accounts to the Queen in the intervals of answering them all. In the next year he succeeded to Lord Derby's inheritance as Prime Minister; but his reign was brief. For Gladstone moved his siege-artillery against the weakest outwork of the Tory fortress and opened the bombardment with his Resolutions on the Irish Church. The first of them was carried, and the Government hung on the brink of resignation. The Queen was understood to view the Opposition's course with disapproval; for though Gladstone was out of office, he had good information through Lord Granville, who had done faithful service as Court tale-bearer and go-between in the troubled times of Palmerston. Gladstone was sceptical, however, as he retained a high opinion of "the Queen's good sense, good feeling, and constitutional knowledge" and was inclined to



doubt her being influenced by "the charge brought against us, if it has been brought by the confidential advisers of the Crown in error, and still more if in light-minded or factious error." He was reluctant to believe that anyone had got at her. For he had served the Crown for forty years; and nobody in his experience—not even Melbourne—had done such a thing. Besides, the Tories were comparative strangers to office. But if they had really persuaded her that she had a grievance, it would be just as well for Granville to explain the matter. Granville proceeded to explain, "although," as he wrote, "it is more than likely that Dizzy may have persuaded the Queen that the idea of our failing in respect came from Her Majesty." Disraeli's strange ascendancy was not yet established; but the observant Granville evidently felt so early as 1868 that he was not above using the Queen's feelings as an instrument of party warfare. This novel circumstance might give rise to difficulties for the next Liberal administration; but Gladstone was not without resources for subterranean warfare at Court. For Granville was a trusted courtier and a sharp observer; and the Dean of Windsor, who had known Gladstone ever since they were both at Eton, was always ready to coach him on correct behaviour with the Queen. But there would be difficulties: so much was clear. For the Queen had her opinions; the Prince of Wales had prejudices of his own; the younger royalties had theirs, to say nothing of the Duke of Cambridge, solidly entrenched as Commander-in-Chief at the Horse Guards; and the cheerful Granville might well write, "On the whole I doubt whether the Royal Family will prove an important element of the sweets of office." That winter Parliament dissolved; a General Election swept away the Tories; and General Grey hurried off to Hawarden with a letter from the Queen.

### III

## HARMONY

#### I

IT was December, 1868. The General Election had produced a handsome Liberal majority and destroyed Disraeli's chances of retaining office ; and a new Prime Minister was needed. Without the slightest hesitation the Queen sent for Mr. Gladstone. First, a telegram arrived at Hawarden announcing that General Grey was on his way with a royal letter. It was brought out to Gladstone, who was in his shirt-sleeves cutting down a tree under the respectful gaze of Evelyn Ashley. (It had been no part of the latter's duties as Private Secretary to Lord Palmerston to hold his leader's coat and watch him cut down trees.) Gladstone read the telegram and handed it to Ashley, remarking curtly, " Very significant." Then the axe resumed its play, until he stopped, leant on the handle, and said in his deep voice, " My mission is to pacify Ireland." Grey arrived that afternoon ; Mrs. Gladstone met him at the station, drove him back to Hawarden, and took him into a room where Mr. Gladstone was working in the firelight by a pair of candles. The royal letter was delivered, and they discussed the Queen's views as to his future colleagues. He knew something of her feelings already. There was Granville's warning earlier in the year ; and Dean Wellesley had been asked to let him know her sentiments about the Foreign Office. His cautions had been quite distinct :

" I imagine the crisis to be near at hand. . . . I write . . . simply in order to assist you, as far as I can, with my experience here & my observation of what goes on.

" 1st. I know that the Queen has a great regard for you, and believes you to be attached to her & anxious to consult her

wishes & comfort, as far as is possible, so that you need have no fear but that you will be received at the outset with the greatest cordiality personally.

"2. She differs however from you on the question of Dis-establishment & will probably tell you so frankly. For this you must be prepared. . . .

"3. . . . The other difficulty I wish only to hint at. The F.O.—Upon this you may expect to find repugnance as to some individual whom you may possibly propose.—All I advise upon this head is that you should not pledge yourself to anyone till you have seen Her. . . . I know of no other obstacle you are likely to encounter. She does not seem to me to object even to advanced Liberals in the Cabinet. But with the F[oreign] Minister next to the Premier, she has intimate personal relations.

"4. Everything depends upon your manner of approaching the Queen. Her nervous susceptibility has much increased since you had to do with her before & you cannot show too much regard, gentleness, I might say even tenderness towards Her.—Where you differ it will be best not at first to try and reason her over to your side but pass the matter lightly over with expression of respectful regret, & reserve it—for there is no one with whom more is gained by getting her into the habit of intercourse with you. Put off, till she has become accustomed to see you, all discussions which are not absolutely necessary for the day." . . .

Gladstone had taken it extremely well, and his reply contained a most disarming admission of his own defects :

"Every motive of duty, feeling & interest that can touch a man should bind me to study to the best of my small power the manner of my relations with H.M. She is a woman, a widow, a lover of truth, a Sovereign, a benefactress, to her country. What titles ! I should be ashamed even to add to them the recollection of much kindness received.

"On the other hand I have plenty of besetting infirmities. Among others I am a man so eager upon things, as not enough to remember always what is due to persons—& I have another great fault in the unrestrained or too little restrained manifestation of first impressions, which I well know is quite a

different thing from the virtue of mental transparency. The height of my ambition is among friends to find those who will frankly warn me against those & other errors. . . . But indeed few things would be more painful to me than the thought in retrospect that I could at any time have caused H.M. one moment of gratuitous pain or trouble.

"Next you may rely upon it that I do not require even your assurance as to the cordial support which the Queen gives to her ministry. Who could suppose that H.M. could now change the unbroken practice of 30 years? . . .

"I receive with pleasure what you say about advanced 'Liberals,' but I may also reply that with no advanced Liberal of whatever school have I ever exchanged a word upon coming events."

So Grey's arrival found him quite prepared. He made no difficulties over Court appointments; the Queen was at liberty to please herself about the Lords-in-Waiting; but it would not be quite so easy to exclude Lord Clarendon from the Foreign Office, because Gladstone was to some extent committed to the appointment. Exclusion at this stage would hardly do, as it might indicate the Queen herself as the objector. The two men travelled back to town together, and Gladstone spoke freely of his projects for the Irish Church. Then he went in to have his audience, and the Queen found him "most cordial and kind in his manner." It was arranged that he should see Clarendon, dwell tactfully upon his failing health, and coax him, if possible, to take some other office. Gladstone confessed to her that it was a fault of his own to be incautious in his speech and talked of his future colleagues—of Mr. Bright, whom he was sure that she would like, and Mr. Lowe, whom he diagnosed as the possessor of "a very angular mind."

His interview with Clarendon was unsuccessful, that veteran insisting gamely that, although he was quite prepared to stay in private life, he should accept no other office. But the Prime Minister had improved the occasion with a little homily upon the need, "in a special sense *now* as



argued chivalrously that the lapse had been partly "due to rashness connected with inexperience, but undoubtedly in part also to a slip of the tongue, the employment of words he did not mean to use, and then a momentary confusion resulting from a painful sense of his lapse"—all accidents that, "as Mr. Gladstone knows alike from observation and from experience, happen to persons who have not like Mr. Trevelyan, the excuse of youth." Full amends should be made to the Duke of Cambridge through the War Department; and Mr. Gladstone hoped that his impetuous subordinate, "who is really a gentleman of high character, ability, and promise, has received a lesson for life." The Queen was gracious when he saw her a few days later; and his exposition on the Irish Church "appeared to be well taken." The Gladstones dined with her, and she was "altogether at ease." Indeed, she brought herself to speak "very kindly about Lord Clarendon, Mr. Bright, Mr. Lowe . . .," although her silence on the Irish Church was slightly ominous. The royal doubts about this measure were plainly stated in a letter, which closed, however, with a handsome assurance that if the Bill were "*such as she can conscientiously approve*, he may *entirely* depend" on her assistance. But in the circumstances she was reluctant to open Parliament in person.

This intimation reached him through Sir William Jenner, who was always slightly inclined to tragic views of the royal health. Health, indeed, was only one of several reasons in the present instance; and the Queen's reluctance was attributed with perfect candour to "an anxiety to avoid any appearance of personal interference in the great question pending with respect to the Irish Church." Gladstone was disinclined to press her and limited himself to a respectful intimation that, owing to unauthorised announcements on the subject, the public would be disappointed. The Queen's reply admitted that the point had not been raised by ministers; and the matter was allowed to drop, the Prime Minister assuring her of his anxiety to ease her burdens, and

the sovereign almost apologising for speaking "of *herself* so much, but as her *object* is to *try & enable* her to go on working for the benefit of her Children, Country & Friends & to do so *as long* as she can—she is *bound* to do every thing to secure that object. . . . *Complete rest*, the Queen (perhaps the *only person* who cannot do so) *never* has." A sympathetic silence closed the incident ; and they settled down to steady correspondence on the Irish Church. At the Prime Minister's request she interviewed a prelate on the Bill and did her best to promote negotiations with the Bench of Bishops. She was "much gratified & relieved by the conciliatory spirit" displayed by Mr. Gladstone ; and the Bill continued to grind slowly through the customary processes of the legislative machine.

The milder matters of routine passed smoothly between Queen and Premier. His nightly letter reported the debates in Parliament ; the Crown Princess of Prussia desired a knighthood for the conductor at Covent Garden ; the growing insubordination of the Irish was deplored, though Mr. Gladstone argued bravely that "in proportion as measures of justice have heretofore been extended to Ireland, affection has been conciliated in those classes which felt the relief" ; and an Egyptian royal visit elicited a sturdy protest against costly displays of hospitality to Oriental potentates with excessive suites. But General Grey broached graver matters, when he wrote to the Prime Minister about "the strong feeling excited by the Queen's continued seclusion." This loyal servant of the Crown, whose length of service permitted him a freedom of initiative unusual with royal Secretaries, "convinced that there is no other way to save us from great troubles," urged ministers to press the Queen for more public appearances. Returning to the subject, he concluded almost brutally that "all she says of the 'weight of work,' 'weakened health'—shattered nerves, &c.—has simply no effect whatever on me." Grey's devotion to the Crown could not be doubted. But Gladstone was more sympathetic and "disposed . . . to allow rather more than

you do for reality in the Queen's ailments or risks of them." Himself more highly strung than many courtiers, he had "a strong sense of the weariness and shrinking of mind which the want of interruption in her work must produce, especially after she has stood for years and may look to stand for many more without anyone to fall back upon." For he could comprehend the solitude in which she plodded through the decorous minutiae of Court routine. But he pressed respectfully for a short prolongation of her stay in London and was rewarded by a prompt concession and the royal admission that "she has invariably found him most ready to enter into her views & to understand her feelings." Indeed, her gratitude was tangibly expressed in an endeavour to restrain the angry Churchmen in the House of Lords. The devoted Grey continued to urge Gladstone to increase the public demands upon the Queen, insisting that "The Queen is wonderfully well." But Gladstone was not yet convinced, although he went so far as to put in a plea for a royal opening of Blackfriars Bridge. This was rejected out of hand; and the Prime Minister improved the occasion by a salutary letter on the value of public appearances as "among the substantial, and even in the long run indispensable means of maintaining the full influence of the Monarchy. For the maintenance of that influence it is Mr. Gladstone's duty to watch with the utmost jealousy: and he cannot dismiss from his mind the apprehension that, notwithstanding by the constant and exemplary, but unseen attention to business, it may by a silent and gradual process be somewhat impaired during Your Majesty's general withdrawal from visible and sensible contact with the people of your realms." General Grey could hardly wish the Prime Minister to put his point more plainly.

But there was another matter in which the Queen's convenience conformed with difficulty to her public duties. A taste for long retreats in distant health-resorts had grown upon her; the memories that hung so thickly round Balmoral drew her to the Highlands; and when she could



not get so far there was a constant tendency to seek retreat at Osborne. Sir William Jenner found hygienic reasons for the pursuit of purer air ; and busy ministers were faced with the troublesome necessity for constant pilgrimages to Deeside or the Isle of Wight. An impending crisis with the House of Lords moved Gladstone to a gentle hint that " the exertions, which Your Majesty's wisdom has spontaneously prompted, to avert a collision between the two Houses of Parliament, would carry yet greater authority, had it happened that they could have been made on the spot." This was explicit, though it still fell short of Grey's hint that "*nothing* will have an effect, but a strong—even a *peremptory* tone." Gladstone was never peremptory with the Queen ; but their prospects of continued harmony were slightly endangered by the necessity of argument about her personal arrangements. But when a royal Secretary of unquestionable devotion pointed the way, how could the Prime Minister avoid his duty ?

The Irish crisis deepened ; and the need for the Queen's presence at some point nearer to London than the Isle of Wight became imperative. The Dean was mobilised ; but he got little beyond a tart rejoinder that " the Queen has had repeated Criseses *there*, in the PRINCE'S *time*." Gladstone was most respectful—" The time of the Ministers is a matter of small importance in comparison with Your Majesty's comfort"—but he argued powerfully that the crisis was comparable in gravity with that of 1832 and that " if occasion should arise for steps of any kind to be taken outside the walls of Parliament, there should be time for them between the sitting of one day and the sitting of the next." This pointed to a highly uncongenial residence at Windsor ; and the Queen yielded unwillingly as " an *entirely isolated* case," which " must NEVER be made a *precedent*." The incident was closed, and Mr. Gladstone had his way.

His success was notable, as the Queen even hinted that she might be able to face Blackfriars in November. The Irish Church still troubled her ; Sir William Jenner still used

the most alarming language on the subject of her health ; and General Grey was almost stern with his royal mistress. She felt so lonely, and complained to Granville that " she had no friend left like the late Baron Stockmar." Her only consolation was that Gladstone seemed inclined to take a more reasonable line about the Church in " a very conciliatory speech, wh<sup>h</sup> is sure to do great good." She had got off to Osborne now and was feeling quite concerned about his health—" He ought to take as much rest as he can—& later Scotch air is sure to restore his strength." Then she escaped to it herself, although its tonic qualities entirely failed to brace her against a reasoned application for ten peerages and fourteen baronetcies. The notion of a Rothschild peerage profoundly shocked her—" It would be very ill taken & would do the Gov<sup>t</sup> great harm." Lord Granville, who was at Balmoral, argued his very best ; but she was quite immovable—" she *cannot* consent to a *Jew* being made a Peer—tho' she will not object to a *Jew* baronet." The Catholics alarmed her, too : " the Pope was never so powerful & the Queen is quite determined to do *all* in her power to prevent this." But, her ultimatum duly delivered, she roared with laughter at her dinner-table and positively chaffed the tactful Granville upon " the manner in which people *submitted* to her to do what she did not wish to do, and not to do what she wished to do." For asperities were sometimes softened in the Highland air.

Gladstone came up to stay that autumn and found her " very gracious." She was " exceedingly easy " with him, and his party audience was " very gracious and kind." The Irish Church had been disposed of ; and there was room for hope that public affairs would be permitted to run a less exciting course. But Blackfriars Bridge still loomed in an uncomfortable future, and Mr. Gladstone was inclined to be persistent about the Rothschild peerage. Blackfriars might be surmounted ; but " The Queen really cannot make up her mind " to ennoble Sir Lionel de Rothschild. She could still be gracious enough, when Gladstone made his own son a

Lord of the Treasury ; and as the time drew near, she positively "*hopes* nothing will prevent her going to open the Blackfriars Bridge on Saturday." The dreaded day arrived, and "nothing c<sup>ld</sup> go off better or more satisfactorily in *every possible way*." The Queen was well ; the weather was correct ; the crowds were most enthusiastic ; and the Lord Mayor got his baronetcy. A rumour that the Admiralty proposed to cut down the crew of the royal yacht without reference to its royal owner was satisfactorily explained by Mr. Gladstone at impressive length. She was a shade uneasy about Ireland ; but she seemed to view her ministers without major misgivings, Granville reporting that the royal doubts were confined to their Colonial policy and administrative economies—the former on the ground "that England was being reduced to the state of a second-rate power," and the latter for the more domestic reason that "it would be disadvantageous to the Sovereign if all places available for old Household servants were abolished." These minor doubts apart, she was not discontented with her ministers. Of course they had been trying about Blackfriars Bridge ; but the dreaded ceremony had passed off extremely well. The troubled waters of the Irish Church lay behind them now ; and there was some prospect of a smooth voyage, if only they could be persuaded to leave things alone. But Mr. Gladstone seemed a little restless, and her apprehension was expressed in a mild intimation that "she w<sup>ld</sup> wish no important measures to be decided on without being duly submitted to her." His mind was busy, though she did not know it yet, with Irish Land ; and he approached the problem with a grave conviction that "to this great country the state of Ireland after 700 years of our tutelage is in my opinion so long as it continues an intolerable disgrace, and a danger so absolutely transcending all others, that I call it the only real danger of the noble empire of the Queen." That conviction determined Gladstone's course for the next quarter of a century. But in 1870 the Queen felt less concern and sent her New Year greetings to the Prime Minister.

## 3

They were soon worrying about the Irish Land Bill, although he was quite confident that "the Queen's own sympathies would be, not as last year, but in the same current as ours." There was a strong suggestion, too, that she should open Parliament. This was received with a succession of discouraging bulletins about her health, enquiries after Mr. Gladstone's cough, and the unpromising conclusion that "it is a very unwholesome year." The Irish Land Bill, when it came to hand, revealed an "apparent want of sympathy with the Landlords," which she found distasteful. But in spite of this defect (unhappily inherent in Land Bills) she was inclined to think that it was "founded on the right principle." As to a royal opening of Parliament, she could not face it, although "the Queen had *seriously* intended to try & make the effort." Gladstone replied with courteous regrets at "the loss of any opportunity of confirming . . . that conception of a direct relation between Your Majesty and the people at large, which must be reckoned as holding no mean place among the practical supports of the Monarchy." The Government, he felt, might with propriety announce that it had been her wish to open Parliament in person, but that her health had not permitted. The Queen concurred; and her good humour was displayed in hopes that "Mr. Gladstone is not overtiring himself & that Mrs. Gladstone is quite well again." She even made repeated enquiries by telegraph after Mr. Bright.

A pamphlet about Women's Rights, which Mr. Gladstone sent, elicited a sturdy expression of her "strongest aversion for the *socalled & most erroneous 'Rights of Woman'* "; and she wrote to him at length about preferment for the Rev. Mr. Duckworth, who had been so good as tutor to Prince Leopold. The Prime Minister had not shown himself particularly helpful about a place for Mr. Engleheart: that was the worst of ministers with an awkward passion for economy. But his tone was more promising about

Mr. Duckworth. That year she lost the faithful (if occasionally somewhat too insistent) General Grey ; and Colonel Ponsonby succeeded him as Private Secretary. The loss was serious, as Grey had struggled hard against her tendency to make herself a recluse, and his long service to the Crown lent weight to his opinions. Now she was likely to be more than ever mistress in her Household ; and Mr. Gladstone's difficulties might be proportionately increased. Not that there was as yet the slightest diminution of her cordiality towards him ; for Mrs. Gladstone and her daughter were invited to Windsor, and the Queen wrote in her most gracious manner that she " thinks Mr. Gladstone will not be displeased at her saying what a charming girl Agnes is." Then she was off to Osborne—this time without an argument about her plans.

The recurrence of Mr. Mill's preposterous proposal to give the vote to women moved her to a commination on " the mad & utterly demoralizing movement of the present day to place women in the same position as to professions—as *men* ;—& amongst others, in the *Medical Line*. . . . The Queen is a woman herself—& knows what an anomaly her *own* position is :—but that can be reconciled with reason & propriety tho' it is a terribly difficult & trying one. But to tear away all the barriers w<sup>h</sup> surround a woman, & to propose that they sh<sup>ld</sup> study with *men*—things w<sup>h</sup> c<sup>ld</sup> not be named before them—certainly not *in a mixed* audience . . ." this was unspeakable. The frightful vision " of allowing *young girls* & young men to *enter* the dissecting room together " shook her profoundly ; and she was " determined for the *salvation* of the *young women* of this country—& their *rescue* from *immorality* to do *every* thing she *can* to put a check to it." Gladstone was deeply sympathetic and turned his grave attention to " the repulsive subject of any combination of men and women in the reception of some of the instruction absolutely necessary for the effective pursuit of the medical profession." Then they were off upon the minor, but recurring, topic of Mr. Ayrton. This gentleman was

First Commissioner of Works, and his combination of sound Liberalism with extreme tactlessness caused endless difficulties. Unhappily his office brought him into contact with the Crown; and the Queen pressed vigorously for a change in his Department. Gladstone was defensive; but whilst he parried her attacks, a change was operated in his Cabinet by an agency that was not susceptible to argument. For Lord Clarendon died in June, and a new Foreign Secretary must be found. His choice fell upon Granville; and the appointment was most congenial to the Queen, who viewed him as "the *only really fit person* for that important post." Granville (whom his contemporaries sometimes knew as "Puss") was always tactful; he had been most obliging when she had her difficulties with Lord Palmerston; and he served Gladstone as an invaluable interpreter at Court. Not that she undervalued Gladstone, since that year she spoke to Granville "in the most kind and flattering manner about you, and the importance you were to her and to the State. She said she had hoped to see you in the Autumn, but that the one important point was to do that which was really most invigorating & resting to you." Their harmony was still unbroken, although she was now undertaking an increasing weight of public work. That summer there had been her Drawing Room, the new buildings of London University, the Windsor Association, Aldershot, and the Workmen's Exhibition. This was a notable advance upon the royal calendar of recent years; but she really dreaded the public opening of the Embankment. With Grey no longer at her elbow to insist, Colonel Ponsonby wrote to excuse her. Gladstone was inclined to argue; but the Queen was firm, and her inability to appear was duly intimated to the public.

But in those summer days the public mind was elsewhere, although Lord Granville had been assured by the Under-Secretary of State that he had never in his long experience known so great a lull in foreign affairs. The judicious Hammond had overlooked the fact that it was July, 1870; and

at six o'clock that evening a telegram informed Lord Granville that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen had accepted the throne of Spain. The Queen received the news in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet letter of July 9. The notion was by no means new to her, as the Crown Princess of Prussia had written to her on the subject four months earlier, when Lord Clarendon advised her to express no opinion on the matter and added sagely that "the proposed arrangement would produce an unfavourable impression in France." Lord Clarendon was right ; and while the French protested violently, there was a half-hearted effort at mediation by Great Britain. Within a week the Paris streets were roaring "*à Berlin !*" and the Opera rang with the *Marseillaise*. But the Queen was strikingly unsympathetic, having "very strong feelings upon the subject of this conduct of the French. It is most preposterous and insulting to Spain, and a return to the ancient policy of France, which was so universally condemned." This brave echo of her letters from Berlin was hardly at variance with the world's opinion ; but the world and Queen Victoria were both unaware that Bismarck meant to have his *casus belli*. When the war-cloud broke in thunder, her preoccupations were all for England ; and she telegraphed for increased "efficiency in army and navy." Gladstone gave full assurances and added his conviction that, "whatever may be said of the prior conduct of Prussia, France has entirely failed to show in the circumstances of the present crisis, any adequate warrant for breaking the peace of Europe." So the Queen was not alone in her convictions. M. Ollivier's "*cœur léger*" shocked him profoundly ; and he was busy safeguarding the neutrality of Belgium against both belligerents.

A minor subject of anxiety was the Princess of Wales, who was in Denmark ; the Prince must go and fetch her home ; but Gladstone impressed him with the expediency of "the shortest possible visit . . . also of an extreme reserve in regard to the expression of opinion on the causes of this miserable war." For the Prince had entertained unfavour-

able views of Prussia ever since that power violated his bride's country in 1864 ; and the Queen concurred in Gladstone's admonitions, adding that her son was " v<sup>y</sup> imprudent, alas ! The Poss<sup>ess</sup> v<sup>y</sup> violent in her anti-Prussian feelings." Her own were clear beyond all doubt, with " *United Germany* most *unjustifiably attacked*, fighting for hearth & Home." She would be less than human to feel otherwise, since " *all* her nearest & dearest & all she holds most dear next to her own beloved Country—will be in danger of life & home." A letter from her daughter at Potsdam repeated a malicious story that the Prince of Wales had " expressed his delight to Count Apponyi that the Austrians were going to join the French—and his hope that we should fare ill." The Prime Minister wrote gravely to the Prince, who contradicted the whole story.

But Bismarck soon provided them with graver matter by the publication of a draft treaty, in which the French appeared to have been quite prepared to annex Belgium and Luxemburg. This disreputable proposal had formed part of their unfortunate endeavours to secure compensation for the Prussian victories in 1866. Nothing had come of them ; but Benedetti had incautiously committed it to writing ; and the draft remained with Bismarck, to be produced at the due season as a shocking revelation of French depravity. Gladstone was not unduly shocked, but he resolved to leave no doubt in French or German minds as to the consequences of a violation of the Belgian frontier. Both belligerents were invited to reaffirm the strict neutrality of Belgium ; British staff officers were sent to Antwerp ; and there was a Vote of Credit for the War Office. (In the turmoil of a world at war he found a moment to carry out the Queen's wishes on behalf of Mr. Duckworth, and that accomplished clergyman was duly installed in a suburban living.) As the armies drew together along the line of the French frontier, the Queen was agonised by her family anxieties. Her conviction that " Germany as a real & our natural ally would always be safe—*never aggressive* " was firmly rooted ;



and Mr. Gladstone was deeply sympathetic with "the strain on Your Majesty's domestic affections." He even sent an article about King Leopold for her to read, together with a little book about the Passion Play at Oberammergau. The crashing impact of the French defeats in front of Metz impressed her as conveying "a *great* moral." But when the air began to fill with hints of peace negotiations after Sedan, she read her ministers a lesson on the danger of alienating Germany by an untimely mediation. Gladstone was in agreement, although he was disturbed by the prospect of an annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and even inclined to favour a joint *démarche* on the subject by the neutral Powers. The Queen retained her attitude of deep respect for "powerful united Germany" together with strong moral reprobation of the French—a "nation w<sup>h</sup>, with but few exceptions seems to be entirely devoid of *truth*, & to live upon vanity, deception, amusement & self-glorification." The diagnosis was severe; but the contrast between her splendid, bearded son-in-law and the frivolities of the Second Empire was almost unavoidable. Besides, the French obstinately refused to recognise the facts; and as the guns began to boom in front of Paris, the Queen "fears there is no hope of an Armistice—for the French seem *quite* mad!!"

Even the war could not extinguish her normal interests—a pension for the worthy author of *The Gentle Life* (resisted by the Prime Minister on the ground that one had been denied to Mr. Martin Tupper, who wrote even worse), the engagement of Princess Louise to a Scottish nobleman, and the appalling risks of railway travel, upon which Mr. Gladstone produced some reassuring figures. A proposed release of Fenian prisoners alarmed her; and she was genuinely grieved when Mr. Bright resigned. But the Queen was quite prepared to open Parliament in person; and as this would be followed by a royal wedding and the inauguration of the Albert Hall, 1871 would be a busy year.

## 4.

The intimation of her plans was received by Gladstone with sober rejoicing "in every act which, without prejudice to Your Majesty's health, tends to make the monarchy of this country, in Your Majesty's person, visible and palpable to the people." For his devotion to the Crown was quite undoubted. It was a time when many European minds tended to look questioningly upon thrones. A Queen of Spain in flight, an Emperor of the French in captivity, his Empress flitting from the Tuileries behind a veil and pitching through a Channel gale on board an English yacht to exile in a seaside hotel—there had been much in recent events to shake the sanctity of monarchy; and even English Radicals were subject to the general infection. For Continental models always exercise a morbid fascination upon British minds. Advanced politicians under George III, who might have been content to make a British protest against British grievances, delighted to sport tricolour sashes and, addressing one another as "Citizen," to masquerade as French *Conventionnels*; the jargon of a later International has something of the same attraction for weak-minded persons in our own day; and in the years succeeding 1870 it was the pleasure of home-made extremists to disguise themselves as Paris *Rouges* by infusing into the homely brew of Radicalism a stimulating dash of Republican sentiment. It made them feel so daring; the tamest speech about the Ballot grew almost exciting, if salted with a disrespectful reference to the Throne; and gentlemen who wished to seem advanced announced themselves as bold Republicans. Their views were normally conveyed in criticism of the cost of royal institutions. But Mr. Gladstone, though he was "the People's William" and a stern economist, lent them no countenance, assuring his anxious sovereign that she would have "no cause to complain of any want of explicitness or decision in the language which will be held by the Government in putting aside, and endeavouring to discredit what

Your Majesty most justly describes as a vulgar error : an error venial in ignorant persons, but discreditable enough in those who mislead them." His Parliamentary statement earned him a telegram of royal gratitude :

" Think your speech quite excellent it should be printed by itself as a valuable record of the subject."

Her " admiration of his very clear & able Speech " was repeated by letter ; and the Queen's confidence in his devotion to the Throne survived all their later disagreements.

But the Queen was not the only member of the Royal Family ; the Duke of Cambridge was Commander-in-Chief ; and his peculiar position might be threatened by Mr. Cardwell's efforts to reform the Army. His royal cousin warned her ministers that he had been " most ungratefully & unjustly treated by a large portion of the Public who are totally ignorant of Military Matters," and was assured by Gladstone that the Duke's dignity would be safeguarded. A spiteful question alleging some communication with German Headquarters was firmly handled, and the Queen telegraphed approval of Gladstone's answer " which must have a good effect for the future." Beyond the Channel, where the guns had ceased, anarchy ruled Paris in the name of the Commune ; but Mr. Gladstone gave a satisfactory answer about the Republican activities of the dreaded Mr. Odger and was rewarded by royal good wishes for his Easter holiday.

The Budget was impending now, and the Queen, who sometimes had a sounder instinct for public feeling than her ministers, expressed misgivings about Mr. Lowe's intended tax on matches, which would " make no difference in the consumption by the *rich*, but the *poorer classes* will be *constantly* irritated by this increased expense and reminded of the tax by the Government stamp on the box." Her prophecy was quite correct ; even Mr. Lowe's learned witticism about "*lucus a non lucendo*" failed to commend it ; and the tax was ultimately dropped. The Army Bill had thrown Conservatives into transports of opposition ;

and though Gladstone was rarely ungenerous to adversaries in his nightly letter to the Queen (he could write of "Mr. Disraeli . . . particularly happy and effective in the tone of banter which he frequently employs"), he was moved to a stern comment on their "sheer obstruction," confessing that in all his long experience of class interests on their defence he had never "seen a case where the modes of operation adopted by the professing Champions were calculated to leave such a painful impression on the mind." The Queen was sympathetic and telegraphed that she was "sorry to see the pertinacious opposition to the Army Bill. She trusts however that it will soon be overcome." A hint that some of its proposals might be dropped elicited a firm statement of her "regret if you find it necessary to abandon any essential portion of so important a measure" and added her conviction that Purchase must be abolished. She was still anxious about the Duke of Cambridge, who must not be expected to make party speeches in the House of Lords defending the proposed reforms; Gladstone explained at length that he would be expected to do no more than the Duke of Wellington had done, and that her cousin had agreed to dissipate a general belief that he was hostile to the scheme. A mischief-making question about the Crown Princess of Prussia was answered in terms which earned the Queen's complete approval—"She thought he answered most judiciously . . . & was g<sup>tr</sup> shocked at the impertinent & vulgar article in yesterday's *Times*." Meanwhile the Army Bill was stranded in the House of Lords. The Government resolved to outflank them by a bold use of the royal prerogative; the Queen was asked to sanction a new Warrant abolishing Purchase and "made no sort of difficulty." A Radical foray about the Queen's retirement enabled Gladstone to pay a public tribute to her increased activity and to round off his apologia with a happy statement "that it was the undiminished and ever warm affection of the country towards Your Majesty, which was the true source of whatever impatience it might be tempted to feel." A royal letter



called in question for the 4th time this year." Questions in Parliament annoyed her beyond all bearing; and "the Queen will not remain where she is, worked & worried and worn, if she is to become the Servant of Parliament and to be responsible to them for all she does! This must be stopped." Ministers must really tell their tiresome questioners that she "cannot undertake any night work . . . nor any residence in London beyond 2 or 3 days." Eloquence grew on her with self-pity, and she closed upon a note of sombre presage:

"What killed her beloved Husband? Overwork & worry—what killed Lord Clarendon? The same. What has broken down Mr. Bright & Mr. Childers & made them retire, but the same; & the Queen, a woman, no longer young is supposed to be proof against all . . .

"She must solemnly repeat that unless her ministers support her & state the whole truth she cannot go on & must give her heavy burden up to younger hands.

"Perhaps then those discontented people may regret that they broke her down when she might still have been of use."

A second letter in the same excited strain insisted that "*No earthly political object can be gained by her remaining a week longer, except gratifying a foolish & unreasonable fancy*"; and when ministers turned to her medical adviser, they got little help, since Jenner (as Gladstone wrote despairingly to Granville) thought it "his duty to look simply at what is desirable in the highest degree for the Queen's health, and to decline taking into consideration how far this can be abated or departed from in deference to the great exigencies of the British Throne. . . . He does that, which if my doctor did for me, I should, however much against my will, be *compelled* to seek another." There was no one about her now who could put gentle pressure on her; General Grey's ascendancy was sadly missed; and when Mr. Helps attempted something in the same line, he was repulsed with heavy loss, the royal pen informing him that his suggestion

"has not displeased her. . . . But it *has greatly* surprised her." The Prime Minister repeated their request a little helplessly; but she was obdurate, and the royal train steamed North.

The incident left traces upon both correspondents. Gladstone was deeply pained, and his resentment was expressed to Ponsonby:

"We have done all we can. She will decide. Of course, if challenged, I shall take the responsibility. But this shield will not wear very long. The whole business is one of the most deplorable I have ever known. . . ."

More inclined than many of his generation to take nerves seriously, he wrote that "the woes of fancy are as real in their consequences as, and far more truly formidable than, the most fearful dispensations of Providence." But this exhibition of the royal nerves had pained him deeply; and when Ponsonby dropped a revealing hint that his royal mistress had supposed that she was being used to serve a party end, his indignation was profound:

"I am surprised and sorry, that the Queen should think that we have had really in our minds, during this deplorable business the benefit of the Government, an idea which I believe has never occurred to any of us. . . . I do not for a moment doubt the reality of the consequences which are due to so truly wretched a cause.

"Upon the whole I think it has been the most sickening piece of experience which I have had during near forty years of public life.

"*Worse* things may easily be imagined: but smaller and meaner cause for the decay of Thrones cannot be conceived. It is like the worm which bores the bark of a noble oak tree and so breaks the channel of its life."

A fervent monarchist, Gladstone was determined to protect the Throne against the current outcry. He gravely scrutinised the Press for symptoms, writing that year to Mrs.

Gladstone of "fresh evidence on the painful subject of the feeling as to the Monarchy. Things are certainly on the road to the bad ; but I hope they may be arrested—the foundations are deep and the walls strong. . . . Will Stephen kindly send me his last *Spectator*, or cut out the article in which the Monarchy and loss of social influence are referred to ? " He meant to stand between such critics and the Throne ; but it was a little bitter when its occupant declined to help.

The episode left traces on the Queen as well. Her health was far from satisfactory ; but it was a little ominous, when the Prime Minister arrived at Balmoral, that for some days she did not feel well enough to see him. Jenner regaled him with the usual jeremiad on the royal health ; but the Prince of Wales and Princess Alice were both of Gladstone's opinion and "very sensible of the mischief." He had his audience at last ; and when it came, the change in her was unmistakable. For that uneasy interview marked a new stage in his relations with the Queen. His reading of it was quite distinct :

"The repellent power which she so well knows how to use has been put in action towards me on this occasion for the first time since the formation of the Government. I have felt myself on a new and different footing with her."

Gladstone was quick to note the change. A chapter ended, and their harmony was over now.



## IV

### DIVERGENCE

#### I

THEY had begun to drift apart. The drift was unmistakable, although the causes in September, 1871, were slightly obscure. The Queen's health counted for a good deal ; and it was unfortunate that Gladstone had been forced by circumstances to make demands upon her time when she was feeling far from well. Sir William Jenner did nothing to encourage her to further efforts ; and General Grey, who always urged her on, had been removed. Her ministers seemed to the Queen to allow the public to form unreasonable expectations of her activity and appeared reluctant to explain the grave objections. That, at any rate, was Gladstone's diagnosis of the royal feelings.

" No doubt she considers it an offence, at least so far as I am concerned, that Parliament was not told authoritatively that she could never be for more than 3 days in London and the like. . . .

" On account of her natural and constant kindness as well as her position, I am grieved ; and this much the more because of what is to come. For the question gathers in gravity. . . . And an instinct tells me, that much will have to be said about it ere long ; more probably with reference to putting forward the Prince of Wales, than to forcing duty upon her against which she sets herself with such vehemence and tenacity."

His tone was grave ; and when Disraeli added to their difficulties by an elaborate discourse upon the royal burdens, Gladstone commented grimly that " that speech of Dizzy's savours of his usual flunkeyism. Its natural operation will

be to increase her bias against visible public duties ; and as a measure of defence for her it is quite needless as there is now no voice of criticism to be heard. Besides, he says what is in some points absurdly untrue. The bulk of Her Majesty's official work is certainly not large." His own loyalty to royal institutions was quite unshaken ; but his personal devotion had been sadly strained.

He left Balmoral with a sincere expression of good wishes for the Queen's complete recovery ; and Ponsonby reported that, although Granville was out of favour, his mistress had (surprisingly) been " very much pleased " with Mr. Gladstone's visit. A speech by Sir Charles Dilke at Newcastle moved her to suggest a more emphatic repudiation of Republican opinions ; and the Prime Minister replied at length with a judicious exposition of the best tactics for loyalists. But that autumn they were interrupted by the grave illness of the Prince of Wales, though the discussion of how best to defend the monarchy continued. As the Prince hung between life and death at Sandringham, the Queen was agonised by the recurrence of her dreaded anniversaries, of those December dates that rang in her ears with the echoes of her own bereavement. Gladstone was deeply sympathetic, and the Queen was grateful for his letters. Then the Prince recovered, and they passed to the more pleasing theme of honours for the royal physicians and a national Thanksgiving, the Prime Minister reporting that Mr. Duckworth had preached an admirable sermon, as well as Mr. Kingsley, although the latter's was " perhaps a little broad in its applications to Sanitary reform and otherwise."

As the Prince struggled back to health, official minds were busy with his future. The topic was not raised by Gladstone, whose first intimation came from Ponsonby in a paper enclosing " a noteworthy letter by young Knollys." There had been previous attempts to find employment for the Prince, mainly in Ireland ; but the Queen was uniformly unsympathetic. The field was now exhaustively surveyed,



ment." The royal tendency to hibernate at Osborne caused enough comment ; Balmoral called for more explanation ; but if his mistress were spirited away to Baden, even Mr. Gladstone's powers of explanation might fail to satisfy indignant Radicals. She was prepared to meet him by confining her absence almost within the limits of the Easter Recess ; but she insisted on the expedition. He made no attempt to thwart her in this cherished project and even announced himself as " glad to watch for & promote an opportunity for giving it effect."

Meanwhile, there was the Thanksgiving. An endless interchange of letters covered every imaginable aspect of this historic function—the religious service, the troops along the streets, the route, the royal carriages. There was some difficulty about the last, as the Prince and Princess of Wales were inclined to favour a carriage to themselves, while the Cabinet concurred in the Queen's preference for driving with her heir ; and then the seating in the royal carriage raised questions of unusual delicacy. These problems of deportment were a welcome interruption to the Prime Minister's deliberations on the *Alabama* award. Next, the Government's announcement of the Queen's intention to attend the Thanksgiving taxed his drafting powers to the utmost, as she conceived that a too positive announcement might appear to minimise " her own *severe* illness w<sup>h</sup> seems to be entirely forgotten . . . she demands that from her Ministers w<sup>h</sup> she has a right to expect." (The tone was more metallic than any Gladstone had been used to, a sharp reminder of the " new and different footing " upon which he stood.) But whatever uncertainties beset her about driving to St. Paul's, she felt none about a crossing from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, a rapid journey " straight thro' France stopping *nowhere*," and a prompt detrainment at Baden. The great day came at last. It left the Queen a little tired, but happy in " the pleasing & gratifying recollection " of the roaring streets ; she wrote her thanks for publication ; and the cheers receded.

Two days later a weak-minded youth named O'Connor achieved notoriety by an assault upon the Queen. Always methodical, she searched the pages of her Journal for a record of the last attempt, sent the Prime Minister a copy, and argued that excessive leniency would have a bad effect. When Gladstone saw her afterwards, he was relieved to find her "in an excellent frame and quite serene." She might be stiffer with him than of old; but his loyalty was undiminished, the Prime Minister recording in a grateful diary his delight "to see how fond she appears to be of Catherine," and his deep admiration of her manner of receiving notabilities at Court—"it is a work of art that she performs." The theme of occupation for the Prince of Wales recurred between them with an authoritative statement of the difficulties inherent in employing him in Ireland. Neither he nor his mother cared for the idea; and the Prince's preference, it seemed, was for attachment in some form to a succession of Government Departments in order that he might learn something of their work. The critics of the Crown, though weak in numbers were vocal in the House of Commons; but a motion by Sir Charles Dilke on the Civil List passed off without misadventure; and the Queen escaped to Baden.

Refreshed by these peregrinations, she returned with vigour to the current topics. O'Connor had been let off far too lightly; Mr. Gladstone thought so too; and they were in full agreement, when the judge that tried the case gave unquestionable proof of judicial eccentricity by sentencing a petty thief to three years' imprisonment while valuing the crime of pushing a wife under a brewer's dray at three months. The Queen's objections to a minor Government appointment were respected, and a post was found at last for Mr. Engleheart. Indeed, the reign of harmony seemed to re-open with her gracious offer to the Prime Minister of a house in his own constituency at Blackheath. But once more they approached the dangerous ground of finding occupation for the Prince of Wales. Gladstone was earnest

on the need of something really adequate to meet the case, favouring occasional attendance at the Indian Council, autumn manœuvres, and a selection of the Foreign Office despatches. But these were mere *hors d'œuvre*, and his main proposal was the abolition of the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland and the residence of the Prince of Wales in Dublin for four or five months out of every year as the Queen's representative. This expedient, he hoped, would gratify the Irish, whilst affording some opportunity of instructing the Prince in the mysteries of government. Gladstone could "hardly find words to express his sense of the weight of the social and visible functions of the Monarchy, or of their vast importance alike to the social well being of the country, and to the stability of the Throne. It was Your Majesty who, by over 20 years of indefatigable practice, raised in those most important matters so high a standard. . . . Mr. Gladstone is anxious in the highest degree that the fund of strength and credit which Your Majesty stored up for the Monarchy in the affections of the people, should not be diminished." This tribute was discreetly followed by a hint that the Prince and Princess of Wales might be called upon to aid her in "the visible duties of the Monarchy," a task in which their prestige would be raised by the performance of real duties in Ireland. The Queen was not impressed. The Irish facet of the scheme struck her as an attempt to make an end of Dublin Castle and to use the Prince as an excuse, while the proposal to call in her heir in order to relieve her of a portion of her public work elicited an admonition that "Mr. Gladstone should remember that The Queen does her utmost to fulfil all these duties as far as her health will permit. The Queen holds drawing rooms and councils, gives audiences, entertains at morning parties and receives many persons at dinner, leaving to the Prince of Wales the Levees, Balls and Concerts so that in point of fact this proposal is anticipated." As for the young couple's moral influence, upon which Mr. Gladstone had laid some stress, they could already exercise it, if they chose ; and the

Prime Minister was bluntly told that it was "a question which more properly concerns herself to settle with the members of her family as occasion may arise." But Gladstone was not easily discouraged. A memorandum was composed with "much pain as well as labour." Lord Granville had advised it; and Mrs. Gladstone "reviewed it and suggested some useful softening changes." Then the Prime Minister sent it off with the happy consciousness of "an act of duty done upon much reflection. God prosper it!" A covering letter, returning bravely to the charge, restated his proposals in a valedictory tone: "His own career, such as it has been, is very near its close. . . . His humble observations are prompted by the desire that nothing of what Your Majesty has done for the country may be impaired or lost, and that as the former, so the latter portion of Your Majesty's reign may be marked by a constant growth of the strength and splendour of your great inheritance." The memorandum followed, in which the Queen's objections were disposed of with faultless dialectic. That was the worst of Mr. Gladstone: he was so difficult to answer. So the Queen vanished, like a Homeric goddess, into a cloud. She had her doubts about the scheme—she should consult the Prince—and Mr. Gladstone might consult anyone he liked. She saw the Prince, to whom the prospect of a residence in Dublin made no appeal; he was still anxious for some form of attachment to the Departments and for a seat on the Indian Council. But the Queen's hope "that this plan may now be considered as *definitely* abandoned" was sadly disappointed, as Mr. Gladstone was still full of arguments in favour of it. Indeed, he found himself wholly unable to devise another and continued to descant upon the benefits to be derived from an apprenticeship in government at Dublin Castle. A royal gesture ended the debate with a brief intimation that she "thinks it useless to prolong the discussion on this proposal & must repeat her hope that Mr. Gladstone after consulting such of his Colleagues who best know the Prince of Wales, will be able to mature some other

plan of employment either in connection with the Indian Office or some other Department of the Govt."

Gladstone was quick to recognise that disagreement with the Queen upon such a major point of dynastic policy must lead to further deterioration in their official harmony; and after stating with grave dignity "with how much grief he finds his views to be so unequivocally disapproved by Your Majesty on a matter of so much importance," he dropped the subject and presumed that in the circumstances the Queen would not require his presence at Balmoral that autumn. The Queen reaffirmed her disagreement almost apologetically and would have been very glad to see him at Balmoral but, in the absence of anything special to say to him, "hardly likes to urge Mr. Gladstone to put himself to the inconvenience & fatigue of coming over." His anticipation of a drop in the royal temperature was correct; for when they met at Windsor, the conversation was protracted and the Queen's manner "as usual kind and pleasing"; but the Prime Minister recorded ruefully that "the whole helped to show me yet more that the occurrences and correspondence of this year have led and will lead her to 'shut up' (so to speak) towards me."

The over-zealous Mr. Ayrton had been giving further trouble, and "to few, probably, has he given more trouble than to Mr. Gladstone. . . . Mr. Gladstone is indeed himself reputed to be a person singularly subject to illusions: but he is quite sure that he has no illusions with respect to Mr. Ayrton." There was a mild recurrence of the topic of the Prince, with some notion of a course of reading for him. Gladstone guessed shrewdly that his "turn appears to move towards that kind of training which is acquired by oral intercourse and by active life"; and the Queen confirmed the impression that he "has *never* been fond of reading & that from his earliest years it was *impossible* to get him to do so." A shy but frigid harmony resumed between them, Gladstone expressing satisfaction at a royal undertaking to open Parliament in alternate years—promptly amended by the



sovereign to "every 3d or 4th year." Aware that pressure would be useless, the Prime Minister refrained; a letter from the Crown upon the possibilities of royal residence in Ireland left him unmoved, "as he has already fully stated his views on this important subject"; and 1872 went out upon a rather cheerless prospect.

## 3

The Government entered upon the fifth year of its life; and at such stages in the life of Governments a diminution of popularity is almost as inevitable as physical defects in ageing men. Besides, the Government had been extremely active; and active Governments are always the first to lose their popularity. The Irish Church, Army Purchase, Irish Land, and the Ballot were a crowded record of achievement; but the public is a little apt to tire, and it began to crave for something that would be a shade more restful. Besides, a good proportion of these benefactions had been conferred on Ireland; and English gratitude is rarely stirred by Irish services. Disraeli's celebrated sneer was uttered: "As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench the Ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest . . ." and even Gladstone had written ominously to the Queen that "the Government has already subsisted through an average length of time."

A problem of some delicacy faced them when Napoleon III died at Chislehurst. The Foreign Secretary wrote in considerable apprehension that "the Queen and the Prince of Wales had determined that he and all the Royal Family should attend the funeral of the Emperor. She desires to pay respect to fallen greatness and to a person who had been very kind to most members of the royal family." This impulse was embarrassing, as France was a Republic, and there was sure to be a Bonapartist demonstration at the funeral, with which the royal mourners would be awkwardly

identified. But fortunately Granville found that the funeral of Louis Philippe had not been attended by the Royal Family, and the impending danger was averted.

This time she would not open Parliament and called almost sharply for the text of the new Irish Education Bill. Its prospects were uncertain ; and though the Queen " much regrets the difficulties which have so unexpectedly arisen & still hopes that the Govt will have such a majority as will enable them to go on," she asked almost eagerly " what w<sup>ld</sup> Mr. Gladstone call a too small majority ? " He answered grimly that they would go on " with any majority however small " and received with becoming humility a royal caution against giving way to " natural annoyance and disappointment." But he was looking forward to the end of his life's task and expressed a hope that " an honourable path would be opened for his retirement." The path was duly opened by the House of Commons. The Government was beaten, and the Prime Minister resigned. But unhappily Disraeli did not see his way to take his place ; for a prolongation of the Government's inglorious existence was more likely to be followed by a sweeping Opposition triumph at the next election. There was a flurried interval of Palace interviews ; and Disraeli's skilful handling of the cards did nothing to heighten Gladstone's esteem for his great competitor, since he wrote with marked distaste to Granville of " the artful dodger." So the Prime Minister was bound once more on the official wheel ; and it revolved with the diminishing velocity of a failing Government.

The royal courtesy was still unchanging ; his health was still an object of the Queen's solicitude ; but they avoided dangerous subjects, and possibly the half-seen prospect of an early parting eased their relations. Now there was nothing much for them to disagree about ; and they could share the joke when a Persian dignitary told him that " the name of Lord Palmerston is remembered in Persia as associated with a sense of apprehension." She was most sympathetic, when the Cabinet got into further difficulties that summer, and

Mr. Gladstone was compelled to become his own Chancellor of the Exchequer—an added burden for which the loss of Mr. Ayrton was some consolation. There was the usual difficulty over Mr. Ayrton, since it was proposed to move him from the Board of Works to the office of Judge Advocate-General, which involved some degree of personal contact with the Crown. The Crown demurred; and it was ultimately arranged that its dealings with the unpleasing functionary should be confined to writing. When Gladstone wrote announcing a daughter's engagement, the royal tone could not have been more charming; and the arrival of an Indian shawl for "a playfellow of our eldest girls" completed his felicity. He found himself back once more at Balmoral in the autumn; and Granville reported that his royal hostess "had never known you so remarkably agreeable." But the honeymoon was not of long duration, as there were difficulties about the holding of a Privy Council before the year was out.

Not that the Queen always made difficulties for Mr. Gladstone, since she overlooked one opportunity most graciously. When Agnes Gladstone married the Rev. Mr. Wickham, the bride's father made a speech: that was, perhaps, to be expected. But as he made it to a small company of relatives and neighbours at Hawarden Rectory, he might reasonably anticipate that it would get no further, since it was 1873, when Prime Ministers had private lives. But he was horrified to find it in the newspapers; and as his speech contained a reference to the royal wedding gift, he wrote hastily to apologise for this horrifying breach of decorum which "must read like a piece of Pharisaism and vulgarity; and though his intention was simply to point his acknowledgment of the kindness of the poor and lowly by reference to Your Majesty's kindness, he now humbly apologises to Your Majesty for that which being published bears in his opinion an unseemly aspect." The royal balm was swift and healing, the Queen finding "nothing in his Speech on the occasion of the late interesting family event at Hawarden to w<sup>h</sup> she c<sup>d</sup> take the v<sup>y</sup> *slightest* exception." Indeed, her

deepest sympathy was offered for this unauthorised disclosure, since "she *does* think it *v*<sup>u</sup> hard & *v*<sup>u</sup> wrong that a family *party* of a comparatively private nature shld have every detail published in the Papers." Was there a hint of irony?

## 4

Their correspondence for 1874 opened with a brisk suggestion by the Queen that it might be as well if steps were taken to secure that future heads of departments in the War Office should be congenial to the Duke of Cambridge as well as to the Secretary of State. The Prime Minister's reply was guarded; but he used more freedom, when the Queen complained of "the progress of these alarming romanizing observances" and emphasised "the importance of avoiding any important Appointments & Preferments in the Church w<sup>h</sup> *have* ANY leaning that way. . . . Protestant to the very *heart's core* as the Queen is—she is shocked & grieved to see England forgetting her position & the higher classes & so many of the young Clergy tainted with this leaning towards Rome!" Besides, she could not conceal from herself that Mr. Gladstone "is *supposed* to have *rather* a bias towards High Church views himself—but the danger of w<sup>h</sup> she feels sure he cannot fail to recognise." The challenge was accepted cheerfully, with Gladstone's "thanks for the very mild and circumspect terms of the allusion to himself." But as he was "from time to time denounced, in some quarters, as a Ritualist, as a Papist, and also as a Rationalist," it left him calm. He was serenely conscious that his ecclesiastical appointments had not been governed "by so poor and unworthy a standard as his own impressions or belief in religion"; as for his own belief, he still retained "what he cherishes as the first of earthly blessings, his mental freedom." But there was not the slightest need for the Queen to suppose the Church in danger; he quoted conclusive utterances of Dr. Döllinger and several Bishops on the subject and left his sovereign convinced that, incontro-

vertible on most themes, it was more than usually injudicious to challenge Mr. Gladstone on religious matters.

But more immediate business than the Church engaged them, since he had indicated that the Cabinet would be very shortly called upon to advise a Dissolution. The Queen concurred with a degree of readiness that almost suggested a royal interest in the result of the elections. But she was solicitous about his health and at pains to save him an exhausting journey from Downing Street to Osborne and back within the day. Then the General Election was on them, and Tories swept the board. Gladstone gave the Queen an early warning of the impending change of Government ; her answer was polite. But when he seemed to take the view that he had better follow precedent and stay in office until they were formally dismissed by the new House of Commons, she showed a touch of impatience. It seemed to her, " whatever advantage there may be in adhering to usage & precedent, that it is counterbalanced by the disadvantage of nearly 3 weeks delay, for the Country & the public Service." Besides, had he forgotten that the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh would be arriving almost simultaneously with the meeting of Parliament ? It would be quite impossible for the Queen to entertain the young couple and to do all the work consequent upon a change of Government at the same time : " People are apt to forget, as she told Mr. Gladstone the other day, that the Queen is *a woman*. . . ." A final sentence coldly informed the outgoing Prime Minister that the Queen " will prefer not giving her opinion on the proposed honours till Mr. Gladstone can put all these before her, w<sup>h</sup> he intends to do."

It was a chilling farewell. Small wonder that he noted in his diary " a letter from the Queen which seemed to me to be of scant kindness " ; and it was scarcely redeemed by the offer of a peerage that he did not want. The formalities were quickly over ; the final audience was " very kind," but " limited " in the subjects of conversation ; and Disraeli ruled in his place.

## 5

Gladstone in Opposition saw extremely little of the Queen. There was a scattered correspondence with her Private Secretary ; but the royal pen was rarely used for Mr. Gladstone. When he congratulated her on family events, he was thanked by General Ponsonby ; and the same kindly hand acknowledged presentation copies of his writings or sent him those of Mr. Martin. Indeed, upon the rare occasions of their meeting, the royal manner seemed constrained. When the Gladstones dined and slept at Windsor in 1875, he found their hostess " kind as usual, but evidently under restraint with me " ; and as he made his reverence at the Levee in 1877 she " smiled but had not a word."

For she was worlds away from Mr. Gladstone now, in the strange fairyland where a romantic Prime Minister played skilfully on her emotions with excited letters from the Treasury Bench, that made a dull debate sound like a tournament reported to the Queen of Beauty by her Unknown Knight. He was so chivalrous on her behalf ; accustomed all her life to survey the movements of her troops, the navigation of her ships, she was learning now to view public business as a succession of reckless onslaughts upon her beleaguered Government gallantly repelled by a band of faithful ministers. This dramatic version of Parliamentary life informed her mind ; and she began to view an enemy of the Queen's ministers almost as though he were an enemy of the Queen. Apart from this, her argument with Mr. Gladstone had made him an object of some apprehension ; and when he presently announced that he intended to withdraw from public life, she received the news with almost unconcealed relief. The news was scarcely a surprise, as he had already confided to her that " he has the strongest opinion . . . against spending old age under the strain of that perpetual contention which is inseparable from his present position." His main activity since his defeat had been in the direction of " snapping the ties and

winding out of the coil " ; and when his preparations for " an interval between parliament and the grave " were quite complete, he took a solemn farewell of the Queen. His humble duty was submitted, " perhaps for the last time " ; his gratitude " for all the marks of kindness and goodness " was patiently rehearsed ; and he assured his sovereign that he should always render Parliamentary service to her throne, family, or person. A postscript added that he was profoundly shocked by the publication of the *Greville Journals*. The royal answer was, perhaps, an incomplete acknowledgment of forty years in public life :

" The Queen thanks Mr. Gladstone for communicating to her his resolution of retiring from the more active duties of Parliamentary life for which she was not entirely unprepared after what he told her himself last year.

" She knows that his zeal & untiring energy have always been exerted with the desire of advancing the welfare of the Nation & maintaining the honor of the Crown, and she thanks him for his loyal assurances of support on all occasions when it may become necessary."

She passed on to endorse his comment on " that horrible book " and its striking contrast with Mr. Martin's publication on " her dear Husband's Life, so pure & bright." That was her somewhat perfunctory farewell to " the People's William."

But was it ? For his ghost still walked. It had a tendency to send her pamphlets about *Vaticanism* and articles on the Prince Consort and copies of his letters to the newspapers, all duly acknowledged by General Ponsonby. There was one pamphlet in particular (it was called *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*) which struck Ponsonby as " excellent, and while encouraging the just indignation of all classes, gives a lead which I imagine will be followed." " The Queen," he wrote, " has not ceased expressing her horror at what she heard (at first only in hints in the despatches) ever since the end of June." But the Queen's

minister was less easily perturbed. At first Disraeli talked airily of "coffee-house babble." But Gladstone thundered on, campaigning strenuously up and down the country in complete and innocent oblivion of his own retirement, until Lord Beaconsfield uttered his angry snarl about "a sophisticated rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity." The inebriation spread from Hawarden to Westminster, from Westminster to Midlothian, and from Midlothian back again to Westminster in the great Liberal majority of 1880. Then Lord Beaconsfield was out; and there was not the slightest doubt that Gladstone—at first single-handed, and later gathering reluctant Whigs and eager Radicals—had put him there, had roused the country, won the General Election, and was by rights the next Prime Minister. What would the Queen do now?



## V

### ESTRANGEMENT

FOR more than half a century the unresting figures of Queen Victoria and Mr. Gladstone toiled across the uneven surface of English public life. The road led both of them towards the summits, since both were guided by the same high sense of public duty ; and for a time, as the path wound slowly up towards the silent peaks, they seemed to follow it together. Not that they always walked in step ; for his ardour frequently outpaced her. But they had travelled the same road up the long slope of public business, eased by private friendship and mutual regard. The valley was beneath them now, and the fellow-travellers toiled up the long ascent together. But suddenly, almost without a warning, they parted company ; the mountain dropped away towards abysses of misunderstanding and distrust ; and their paths diverged. That sad divergence, by which their remaining years were clouded, must be studied if the watchers of a later age are to realise which of them was the first to turn away, from what causes, and in what direction, and how it happened that the two leading figures of a great generation ended their journey with their backs turned obstinately upon each other.

## I

It is a simple matter to detect the first interruption of the Queen's friendly intercourse with Mr. Gladstone. They had been acquainted for thirty years before an unhappy argument about her time-table in 1871 caused them to drift apart. Earlier discussions of the same theme had left their friendship unimpaired. But the Queen's health that summer was uncertain, and the effect on their relations was grave.

Gladstone was quick to note the change in her, recording ruefully after his next visit to Balmoral that "the repellent power which she so well knows how to use has been put in action towards me on this occasion for the first time since the formation of the Government. I have felt myself on a new and different footing with her."

That was the watershed. The fellow-travellers had passed the crest, and now the mountain fell steeply away beneath them. The slope was gradual at first. For a tactful secretary reported the Queen "very much pleased" with Mr. Gladstone's visit; his sympathetic letters in the anxious days of the Prince of Wales's illness earned high favour; and the royal gratitude found unusual expression in the considerate offer of a house in his own constituency. But presently a protracted argument about the public duties of the Prince of Wales further abridged their intimacy; and when they met, the royal manner "was as usual kind & pleasing. Nevertheless the whole helped to show me yet more that the occurrences & correspondence of this year have led & will lead her 'to shut up' (so to speak) towards me." They could still exchange condolences and comments on the new books and friendly courtesies on family occasions. The Prime Minister still found his sovereign "extremely well & very gracious." But he was careful now to avoid those personal and dynastic questions, upon which he held such strong and uncongenial views. He no longer felt at liberty to press the Queen for more public appearances or to urge the growing claims of the Prince of Wales. The normal stream of official business might still flow smoothly between Downing Street and Windsor; but full confidence was at an end. For a slight chill had fallen between them.

Their relations had reached this mildly uncomfortable stage, when Mr. Gladstone went out of office in 1874. Perhaps there was just a touch of hurry, which he found "of scant kindness," in her eagerness to accept his resignation. But when they met, she tactfully repressed an inclination to inform him that the Government's defeat "was

greatly owing to his own unpopularity, and to the want of confidence people had in him " (although she thought so). Indeed, her kind duplicity was so successful that a colleague found him " quite 'under the charm ' " on his return from Windsor ; and at his final audience, when the Queen gave him good advice about his health, she seemed " very kind." There was no indication yet of any shrinking from him ; and he still sent her copies of his books and photographs of pictures she might care to buy with all the confidence of one who felt himself to be a welcome correspondent.

Was he ? For a few months, perhaps. But other influences were soon at work ; and 1874 was not far gone before the Queen, a ready pupil, learned to view Disraeli as the pattern of a Prime Minister and to turn almost with relief from her contrasting memories of his predecessor. Her brief experience of Disraeli during his first Premiership in 1868 left little more than an excited recollection of his letters—such letters " in his best novel style," as someone said, " telling her every scrap of political news dressed up to serve his own purpose, and every scrap of social gossip cooked to amuse her "—and of a slightly fulsome gentleman who thanked her " at your Majesty's feet " for his wife's peerage and alluded with emotion to his own unworthy efforts in the service of " a Sovereign whom it is really a delight to serve." It had not seemed to make much impression at the time. But the effect was heightened by the intervening years of sedate correspondence with Mr. Gladstone. For Mr. Gladstone never wrote like that. His humble duty was presented with becoming reiteration ; but he was never at her feet. He never wrote to say, even if he thought so, that it was a delight to serve her. His grave epistolary manner left little room for compliments ; and public business received far more of his attention than private feelings. Indeed, his slightly exacting sense of public duty—her duty—occasionally came in conflict with her feelings. He had his lighter moods, in which he sent her articles to read and little books about the Passion Play at

Oberammergau and recommended water-colours by deserving artists. But his House of Commons letters were a sober chronicle, his Cabinet reports an unexciting record of business done. There was no fault to find with them ; those miracles of understatement were impeccable, a formality quite faultlessly performed. Their imperfections, if they had any, resided rather in what they did not say than in anything that Mr. Gladstone wrote. For he never regaled her with the London gossip : it may be doubted if he knew it. There was no picture of excited gentlemen contending in a crowded House for rival policies, of her devoted servants on the Treasury Bench engaged in their nightly act of saving England, no breathless narrative of swaying Cabinets in fevered council with ministers in sharp dissent conforming by a last-minute decision to her royal will. While Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, it was not easy for the Queen to dramatise the *rôle* of constitutional monarch.

So it was quite a pleasant thrill when Mr. Disraeli came to Windsor, dropped on one knee, and kissed her hand with an exciting murmur of, " I plight my troth to the kindest of *mistresses*." This seemed to promise something warmer than the slightly chilling stream of Mr. Gladstone's never-failing courtesy ; and when her new Prime Minister wrote of " that thorough knowledge of what was going on, and due control over the public business, which he always wishes your Majesty to possess and exercise," the royal prospect was still brighter. Here was a lively contrast with Mr. Gladstone, and when occasion offered, Disraeli did not fail to point it. For soon the debates on the Public Worship Regulation Bill brought the ex-Premier from Hawarden ; and when he spoke, Disraeli's letter to the Queen informed her that " in a rhetorical point of view he surpassed himself ; as a statesman, he threw off the mask, and the only logical conclusion of his address was the disestablishment of that Church of which Your Majesty is the head. The effect of his speech on the House was to alarm it . . ." and the skilled reporter passed on the feeling to the Queen, a gallant Premier

standing between her threatened Church and the vague menace of Mr. Gladstone. This was a novel use to make of the Prime Minister's reports on Parliament. In former years Gladstone had recorded scores of Opposition speeches by Disraeli; his language was severely neutral, and sometimes he cheerfully admitted that "Mr. Disraeli was particularly happy and effective in the tone of banter which he frequently employs." But though he viewed his rival with profound distrust, Gladstone had made no attempt to infect the Queen with his suspicions. Even his poor opinion of Disraelian tactics in a recent crisis, which had exploded in the private comment (almost unprecedented for Mr. Gladstone) that the Leader of the Opposition was an "artful dodger," found no echo in Gladstone's official letters to the Queen. But his successor felt less restraint. It undeniably made better reading; and as it was his duty to let his sovereign know everything, he would let her know precisely what he thought of Mr. Gladstone.

The Queen, who seemed receptive, replied that "Mr. Gladstone's conduct is much to be regretted though it is not surprising." So Disraeli, in the congenial rôle of a sound Churchman, played lightly on the Queen's apprehensions, and two heads were sadly shaken over Mr. Gladstone's goings on. The spell began to work; a faint tinge of alarm began to creep into her view of the late Prime Minister; and within a year Disraeli was recording gleefully that royal concern about his own health was dictated "not so much from love of me as dread of somebody else." So it was almost a relief when Mr. Gladstone wrote from Hawarden informing her of his resignation of the Liberal leadership. His humble duty was submitted quite touchingly, "perhaps for the last time." But the Queen was notably untouched; a further instalment of Mr. Gladstone's duty was the last thing that she desired; and her letter of farewell was almost perfunctory.

A further innovation threatened the hold of any Opposition speaker on royal favour. For a free use of courtly

terminology increased the Queen's belief that acts of her Government were acts done personally by herself. Other ministers had governed England in her name ; but Mr. Disraeli and his obliging colleagues seemed less presumptuous, since they appeared to govern according to her wishes. Had he not assured her on the Public Worship Bill that " the only object of Lord Cairns and Mr. Disraeli had been to further Your Majesty's wishes in this matter, which will always be with them a paramount object " ? If that were so, the Bill itself was an expression of her royal will ; and it was highly indiscreet, if not actually treasonable, for members to challenge it. A legal fiction is a heady diet ; and as this belief grew on her, richly encouraged by Disraeli's flowers of speech, Opposition speakers steadily declined in royal favour with each Parliamentary onslaught delivered on the Queen's ministers. For she was gradually learning to identify herself with their decisions ; and if they happened to be Conservatives, so much the worse for Liberals.

Romance and policy alike endeared the illusion to Disraeli. It made him feel like Strafford to inform the House of Commons that he stood there " by the favour of the Queen," like Bolingbroke in full cry after his *Patriot King* to descant upon the blessings of " a real Throne." His antiquarian sense was richly satisfied by pre-Revolution gestures of obeisance. It was delightful to behave as though the Whigs had never worked their sordid will upon the Constitution, as though a Venetian oligarchy of land-owners had never usurped the government of England, and he was carried in his chair through Whitehall to kneel, a loyal servant of the Crown, before his royal mistress. The realities of official life in 1875 might fall a trifle short ; there was a dearth of ruffles ; he rarely wore a sword ; and the House of Commons seemed to play a rather larger part than was convenient in a historical romance. But facts were rarely strong enough to mar Disraelian romance. If he was capable of love-letters addressed to sexagenarian countesses that Romeo

might have found slightly embarrassing, what difficulty was there in transforming Queen Victoria into a cross between Titania and Catherine the Great? It satisfied his taste for romance to woo his sovereign with circumstantial tenderness; it was highly entertaining to pretend that his head might leap from its shoulders at her casual command; besides, it was extremely gratifying in cold reality to live on terms of intimacy with a Queen; and public business was undeniably facilitated by the maintenance of easy relations with the Crown. There was everything to recommend it; and Disraeli entered with unequalled gusto on his game of royal make-believe. Derby, a cautious colleague, was already writing to enquire, "Is there not just a risk of encouraging her in too large ideas of her personal power, and too great indifference to what the public expects? I only ask; it is for you to judge." A shrewd Prime Minister judged that the Queen was a valuable addition to the pieces on the board. He knew, he felt quite certain that he knew just how to move her; and if other players were likely to be less successful, was he to complain?

This mood controlled his dealings with the Crown. A happy cry informed a correspondent that he felt "fortunate in having a female Sovereign. I owe everything to woman; and if in the sunset of life I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence." Disraeli excelled in captivating dowagers; and now his cap was set at the greatest dowager of them all. His success, if his own evidence could be believed, was quite astonishing. The royal features melted into smiles at his approach; she beamed; she glided up and down the room; and he was positively invited to take a chair, although the cautious wooer put it back against the wall before he left in order to preserve their secret. The charmer found his Queen an easy conquest; and it was not the least of his resources to remind her constantly that she was a Queen. Her own dramatic instincts, starved by her long retirement and the unexciting rôle of constitutional monarch, were richly satisfied by the new tone. It was a thrill to feel

herself the embodiment of England, to be informed when the Treasury bought shares in the Suez Canal that "It is just settled: you have it, Madam." The dull charade of public business acquired fresh meaning for her, as she learned from her delightful teacher to identify each act of state with her own self. It had its drawbacks (as the cautious Derby had foreseen), when the new appetite impelled her to force on the Royal Titles Bill at an extremely awkward moment. Her own activities in this connection were engagingly confessed to Disraeli in a generous admission of "how much *she* had urged this herself." But the Prime Minister, having raised the wind, managed to ride it in tolerable comfort and earned the Queen's undying gratitude for her "kind, good and considerate friend" on the Treasury Bench.

But the transformation of her *rôle* had graver consequences for the Opposition. Early in 1875 Gladstone emerged from his retirement to speak upon an Army Bill, which looked suspiciously like an attempt to re-introduce Purchase by subterfuge. Disraeli, in his best mock heroics, reported to the Queen that "the greater event was—the return from Elba: Mr. Gladstone not only appeared, but rushed into the debate. The House, very full, was breathless. The new members trembled and fluttered like small birds when a hawk is in the air. . . ." But the Queen commented sternly on "the extraordinary and to her incomprehensible course of the Opposition." For she was learning to regard all critics of her present ministers as wrong-headed men. This awkward mood deepened upon her as the current issues shifted to foreign politics and the Turkish Empire was outlined in a red glare of insurrection. In those eventful weeks, as Disraeli tasted the first joys of international complications, Gladstone laid aside his notes on "Future Retribution"; a more rousing theme was drumming in his ears; and England heard the first thunders of his invective against the Turks—"their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kai-



makams and their Pashas"—and any ministers who would perpetuate that tyranny in Europe. This was unfortunate in view of the Queen's new-found belief that foreign policy was an improper theme for controversy; and she was moved to frank indignation by "the short-sightedness and unpatriotic conduct of those who would make a *party question* of such a momentous crisis as the present, instead of rallying round the Government to assist it in the *anxious* and delicate task of procuring peace without losing sight of the true interests of the great Empire." It was not altogether clear how public men who disagreed with ministers could rally round them to much purpose; but the Queen could scarcely admit that disagreement was allowable. More than ever it seemed to her that criticism of her Government was a disloyal act; and Mr. Gladstone in 1876, breaking in thunder on the heads of ministers and gaily oblivious of his own retirement, was nothing if not a critic. When he entertained St. James's Hall with a sustained tirade, Disraeli found her "most indignant . . . she thinks the Attorney-General ought to be set at these men; it can't be constitutional." The miscreants included Ruskin, Froude, Carlyle, Burne-Jones, the Duke of Argyll, and Canon Liddon; and Disraeli, with discriminating chivalry, made excuses for Granville and Hartington and the less vocal elements of the Opposition, "to whom, I was sure, she might look, if necessary, with confidence." But by consent Gladstone was left under the silent ban of royal disapproval.

Indeed, it was not always silent. The Queen (as she wrote to a daughter) could only think that he had "taken leave of his reason!" Times were too serious for party politics. When Lord Beaconsfield had uttered a grave threat of war, it was disgraceful to provide the world with the spectacle of a divided nation—"Mr. G. has unfortunately *not* only injured himself in trying to injure the Government; he has done irreparable mischief in encouraging Russia and people *abroad* to think that we shall *never* fight or resist their encroachments and arrogance." And if that were not bad

enough, he had said the most unpleasant things about British policy—her policy :

“ It is not patriotic and has nothing to do with Conservative or Liberal, or the general jealousy and dislike of Lord Beaconsfield, which is in itself very wrong when great national interests are at stake, and they might as well accuse me of untruthfulness as Lord Beaconsfield in his plain and perfectly faithful statement of the anxious and difficult negotiations, of which I am completely cognisant. . . . To me it is, I must say, utterly inexplicable and totally at variance with usage, for statesmen who have been in high office and who have *known* all the difficulties and anxieties of Government to behave as they have done.”

To this point had the Disraelian transformation of his Queen proceeded. For the charm had worked ; and now she saw his critics with his eyes.

Those eyes were, to say the least, disinclined to make allowances for Mr. Gladstone. For Lord Beaconsfield regaled his humbler correspondents with elegant abuse of “ the Greenwich Tartuffe ” and “ that unprincipled maniac Gladstone—extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy, and superstition ; and with one commanding characteristic—whether Prime Minister, or Leader of Opposition, whether preaching, praying, speechifying, or scribbling—never a gentleman ” ; and his royal pupil progressed so far that an observer at Balmoral could report that “ her denunciation of her late Ministers last night was couched in plain English, worthy of her Grandfather. I was really startled at its vehemence and suggested that Mr. Gladstone had really never mastered nor understood Foreign Policy.” That was extremely handsome of the Postmaster-General ; and, these ministerial promptings aiding, she reached a further stage. For soon Lord Beaconsfield informed an intimate that “ she seems now really to hate Gladstone ” and—better still—“ she really thinks G. mad.” Such were the consequences of venturing to disagree with ministers upon the Eastern Question in 1876.

It marked a stage in the deterioration of the Queen's view of Mr. Gladstone. The slight chill of 1872, the awkwardness of 1874, became positive dislike and disapproval in 1876. Their paths could never meet again, and the angle of divergence grew sharper as the years went by. She recognised it later as the decisive moment, and her catalogue of his misdeeds invariably opened with 1876—"Mr. Gladstone *she* could have nothing to do with, for she considers his whole conduct since '76 to have been one series of violent, passionate invective against and abuse of Lord Beaconsfield, and that *he caused* the Russian war, and made the task of the Government of this country most difficult in times of the greatest difficulty and anxiety, and did all to try and prevent England from holding the position which, thanks to Lord Beaconsfield's firmness, has been restored to her." Those were the charges; familiar on Conservative platforms, they acquired unusual distinction from the royal pen. But now her transformation was complete, and under the magician's wand the Queen emerged in the impressive and familiar outline of her later manner.

Nothing, perhaps, was more indicative of the change in her than her altered attitude to statesmanship. In former years she had found few things more distasteful than Lord Palmerston's ineradicable tendency to be dashing in his foreign policy; all her counsellors—the Prince Consort, Lord Aberdeen, Sir Robert Peel—had uniformly disapproved; and she had dutifully shared their feelings. Indeed, the milder note of Mr. Gladstone found favour very largely by reason of its contrast with the metallic tones in which Lord Palmerston habitually addressed the Continent. But her new favourite was frankly Palmerstonian. Had he not gleefully informed a friend that "since Pam we have never been so energetic, and in a year's time we shall be more"? His admiration of the old *sabreur* of diplomacy had always been ungrudging; and the half-written novel in his desk at

Hughenden was full of compliments to that engaging figure who "seemed never better than when the gale ran high." His everlasting youth, his indomitable gallantry, his endless composition of state papers were all enviously portrayed in *Endymion*; and the admiring novelist exclaimed with genuine emotion, "Look to Lord Roehampton; he is the man. He does not care a rush whether the revenue increases or declines. He is thinking of real politics; foreign affairs; maintaining our power in Europe." It is hardly singular that Disraeli's diplomacy was full of Palmerstonian echoes; but it was more surprising that the Queen admired it, since she had so conspicuously failed to like the original. But then Lord Palmerston had never taken the slightest pains to identify her with his own proceedings. He never made the least pretence that his working days were spent in imposing her royal will on a reluctant Cabinet or heralded an annexation with a happy cry of "You have it, Madam." It is improbable that he ever thought of it or that, if he had, he would have dreamt of doing so. But his disciple was more sagacious. Disraeli's mildly Palmerstonian policy was made acceptable at Court by a most un-Palmerstonian technique; and in reward a devoted sovereign espoused his cause, smiled upon his friends, and watched his enemies with angry disapproval.

Quite unsuspecting, Mr. Gladstone persevered in Opposition. It was a little ominous, perhaps, that at the Levee in 1877, "the Queen smiled but had not a word." There was no public indication, though, that she had flung her shield invisibly (like a Homeric goddess) over Lord Beaconsfield and that each spear which Mr. Gladstone hurled against it jarred the Queen's sheltering arm. He had no means of knowing how abysmally he had declined in royal favour. But there were evidences of a new tone about the Court that seemed unpromising. Early in 1878 he met a former colleague of Lord Beaconsfield's, recently resigned from the Cabinet:—

"Yesterday I saw Carnarvon, whose conversation was remarkable. . . . But what I wish particularly to record are

two statements given in the strictest confidence, which show how little at present within the royal precinct liberty is safe.

"1. It has happened repeatedly not only that Cabinet Ministers have been sent for to receive 'wiggings' from the Queen—which as he said it is their affair & fault if they allow to impair their independence—but communications have from time to time been made to the Cabinet warning it off from certain subjects and saying she could not agree to this & could not agree to that. . . .

"I said it recalled James II and the Bill of Rights to which he assented. It is at any rate a position much more advanced than that of George III who I apprehend limited himself to a case of conscience like the Coronation Oath. But that controversy was decided once for all when Geo. IV after a terrible struggle agreed to the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill.

"I said that such an outrage as this was wholly new, totally unknown in any Cabinet in which I had served; and that the corruption must be regarded as due to Lord Beaconsfield, which he entirely felt . . ."

Here was an awkward prospect for the next Cabinet; and Mr. Gladstone grimly foresaw constitutional trouble. But as yet he knew little of a more personal aspect of the Queen's altered mood. How could he tell that his own name was now a synonym of error in the royal correspondence? He could not know that when Lord Beaconsfield wished to describe an unsatisfactory speech by a misguided colleague, he termed it to his mistress one "which might have proceeded from Mr. Gladstone," or that within a month of her silent smile at the Levee the Queen herself was writing of his own "wildness, folly and fury!" When the diplomat returned from Berlin, proudly bearing "Peace with Honour," Cyprus, and the Garter, she shared Disraeli's triumph and wrote in glee that "high and low are delighted, excepting Mr. Gladstone, who is frantic." And as the sands of that triumphant ministry ran out, the Queen was writing to a Court lady that "I never could take Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Lowe as my Minister again, for I never COULD have the slightest *particle* of confidence in Mr. Gladstone *after* his

violent, mischievous, and dangerous conduct for the last three years." Once more the tale of his iniquities was dated from 1876, from the opening of his presumptuous attack on Lord Beaconsfield's, on England's, on the Queen's foreign policy.

In those winter days of 1879 Mr. Gladstone travelled North to aggravate his offence. The train took him to Midlothian ; and for a week the thunders of his eloquence rolled round the village halls. Lord Beaconsfield wrote airy little notes to ladies about " the oratory of the Impetuous Hypocrite." All this " rhodomontade and rigmarole " failed to amuse him. But when the Queen wrote anxiously to urge a combination with " some of the sensible, and reasonable and not violent men on the other side " against a new and most disturbing appetite for Home Rule among the Irish members, he reported moodily that " there are no ' sensible and reasonable, and really not violent men ' in the ranks of the Opposition on whom your Majesty might now act. The nominal leaders have no authority ; and the mass, chiefly under the guidance and authority, or rather inspiration, of Mr. Gladstone, who avoids the responsibility of his position, are animated by an avidity for office such as Lord Beaconsfield, after more than forty years' experience, cannot recall." Such appetites are frequent in Oppositions on the eve of General Elections ; and the stern sowing of Midlothian was bearing fruit.

Few contrasts, perhaps, are livelier than that between the effects of Mr. Gladstone's speeches and their austere reality. For the Queen was soon writing about his " violent, passionate invective against and abuse of Lord Beaconsfield." But, by modern standards of abuse, there is nothing half so exciting in those grave indictments of the Government. It might be a new departure, when the train stopped at Hawick, for an ex-Premier to step out and inform the waiting crowd that their cause was " the cause of peace, which is the cause of justice, which is the cause of liberty, which is the cause of honour, and which, in the hands of the people of this

country, by the blessing of God, will not fail." But these incitements were hardly dangerous to public order. A grave catalogue of ministerial blunders from the time of the Andrassy Note to the Treaty of Berlin, a chilly glance at the latest complications in Afghanistan, detailed analysis of some departure from the strict principles of public finance (with a passing reference to the purer practice of Sir Robert Peel), a solemn warning against fresh commitments in every corner of the earth, and a good deal of close reasoning upon the rousing theme of Scottish land tenure—such was the heady diet upon which Mr. Gladstone sustained his hearers. Rendered more palatable by the deep utterance and by the knowledge that an ex-minister of seventy was there to plead the case in person, it was enlivened by occasional excursions into burning irony—"We have undertaken to settle the affairs of about a fourth of the entire human race scattered over all the world. Is not that enough for the ambition of Lord Beaconsfield? It satisfied the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Canning, Lord Grey and Sir Robert Peel; it satisfied Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell, ay, and the late Lord Derby. And why cannot it satisfy . . ." The scorn was evident; but its expression kept within the strictest limits of decorous argument. He might permit himself a fling at "false phantoms of glory," or a grim demonstration that Cyprus, so far from safeguarding the road to India, lay three hundred miles away from it; the march of Empire on the north-west frontier of India moved him to an indignant picture of "the women and the children . . . driven forth to perish in the snows of winter"; and he was not always tender with triumphs over Zulus "slain for no other offence than their attempt to defend with their naked bodies their hearths and homes, their wives and families." The point of view, perhaps, might seem a shade eccentric in 1879; for Mr. Gladstone often suffered from a tendency to run ahead of his age. But it was not easy to detect the smallest deviation from patriotism or propriety.

Even in the mounting heat of the General Election his

references to Lord Beaconsfield were marked by an extreme decorum. The Prime Minister invariably appeared as "the very eminent and distinguished man who is the heart and soul and life and centre of the Government"—that "Administration of which he is the very distinguished head." Only, indeed, in a panegyric on Sir Robert Peel did the indignant orator permit himself a scornful glance at "his superiority to all the tricks that have been in vogue." His sole allusion to the Queen was of unimpeachable loyalty—solemn enunciation of "what has been the attachment of Her Majesty to Scotland, and what has been the attachment of Scotland to Her Majesty, how fondly her name has been and is revered and loved under every roof-tree of the land." Perhaps his strictures on a recent tendency to overstrain the royal prerogative were unpalatable; the treaty-making power of the Crown, he argued, should not be exercised in the absence of full public knowledge and approval of the treaty, and the secret conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish Convention was a glaring violation of this usage. His language was precise—"They have abridged the just rights of Parliament, and have presented prerogative to the nation under an unconstitutional aspect, which tends to make it insecure. To save that prerogative will, in my opinion, be the work of prudence, caution, of studious reverence for ancient usage, careful respect for the rights of the people. But no repetitions of those strange pranks will, as I believe, be endured by the British nation; they will not consent to have their hands bound by the arbitrary act of a Minister. . . ." The warning was judicious; couched in a tone of grave reproof and deep respect for constitutional practice, it was about as revolutionary as Burke. But he was merciless to the new absolutism, although his constitutional theory did not go beyond the teaching of every lecture-room in Victorian England:—

"You may remember, perhaps, a speech of Lord Beaconsfield's in which he stated—perhaps not reflecting how much



of his inner mind he was revealing by the phrase, when he said that 'the world was governed by sovereigns and statesmen.' Well, to that statement I demur. I think there are some other people that have to do with the matter, for I will add to statesmen Parliaments, and I will add to Parliaments nations. You are congratulated from time to time on the privilege of being a self-governed country. Let us take care that we recognise the fact. . . . There is no power, external to the House of Commons, that can endanger your freedom or tamper with your rights. The House of Lords has not the strength. The Sovereign if the Sovereign were so minded—and there have been in other days Sovereigns who were so minded—the Sovereign has not the power. There is no power in this country that can put your rights in prejudice except the House of Commons itself."

This sober reasoning could hardly please the Queen, if she had succumbed to the new teaching as completely as Carnarvon seemed to indicate. But Gladstone had no reason to suppose that she would take such matters personally; as Granville put it later on, "in attacking the Government, it never entered into Mr. Gladstone's head that he was opposing Your Majesty, however much what he said may have been disapproved by Your Majesty." At the Levee just before the General Election he noted that the sovereign "with her usual high manners put on a kindly smile." He was well aware, of course, of her attachment to the Government; when its defeat was evident, he attributed her brief delay "to the Queen's hesitation or reluctance." But there was not the slightest warning that she "never COULD have the slightest *particle* of confidence in Mr. Gladstone." That was the hidden gulf between them.

## 3

The situation in 1880 was anything but simple. One fact was past dispute: Lord Beaconsfield had been defeated. An anguished outcry from the Queen expressed "the grief to her of having to part with the kindest and most devoted

as well as one of the wisest Ministers the Queen has ever had." But beyond that unpleasant fact the further prospect was obscure. It could not be denied that the Liberals had been too many for Lord Beaconsfield; but when it came to be decided who was to be her next Prime Minister, there seemed to be too many Liberals for the Queen as well.

The party had two official leaders—Lord Granville in the House of Lords and Lord Hartington in the House of Commons—to say nothing of the claims (slightly unofficial in view of his retirement from the leadership in 1875) of Mr. Gladstone. Lord Beaconsfield was half inclined to think that his successor would be the blameless Granville; in that case Gladstone (it was to be hoped) would decline to serve under him, preferring to hang menacingly on the flank of ministers, who could rely upon Conservative support against this danger. The Queen's reasoning was similar—"My great hope and belief is, that this shamefully heterogeneous union—out of mere folly—will separate into many parts very soon, and that the Conservatives will come in stronger than ever in a short time. Possibly a coalition first . . ." But before this agreeable prospect of Liberal disunion and Tory triumph could materialise, she must find a Liberal Prime Minister. Her own inclination was to send for Hartington, and the Prince of Wales agreed. One thing, at least, was clear: she would have nothing to do with Mr. Gladstone. General Ponsonby was told to make that perfectly plain to Granville and Hartington; and she informed Lord Beaconsfield that "of course I shall not take any notice of . . . Mr. Gladstone, who has done so much mischief."

This was extremely awkward, as the country (it so happened) regarded the General Election as a victory for Mr. Gladstone. He had been Prime Minister before; and to humbler persons there seemed to be no reason why he should not be Prime Minister again. The incessant thunder of his criticism since 1876 had done more than any other single factor to bring down the Government; and that circumstance, which marked him in the Queen's eyes as a political

outlaw, indicated Mr. Gladstone to most people as the next Prime Minister. To be sure, he had emphasised his own position as a member of the rank and file by the expression of a public hope that "the verdict of the country would give to Lord Granville and Lord Hartington the responsible charge of its affairs." But that might be a mere *façon de parler*. For it was two years since his son had asked if he thought he would have to go back to office, and the deep voice had answered: "It does not depend on me but on the people." The people's view was tolerably clear, with crowds at railway stations cheering the member for Midlothian all the way home to Wales and letters pouring into Hawarden at the rate of hundreds a day. Even the German Crown Princess, dutifully offering a daughter's consolations to the Queen, could see it—"What is to be done with Mr. Gladstone if he is not to be in the new Ministry; won't he be a terrible thorn in their side out of office? I am afraid from what I can hear and from what I read in different papers, that Mr. Gladstone is more popular among the Liberals and Radicals than ever, in fact, they are mad about him. It is not pleasant to think, but so it is." He was dazed but happy in the dreamlike "downfall of Beaconsfieldism . . . like the vanishing of some vast magnificent castle in an Italian romance"; and his diary confessed that he was "stunned, but God will provide." Fortified by a short spell of reading (which included some Egyptology, *Guy Mannering*, and "that most heavenly man, George Herbert") and a bout of tree-felling at Hawarden, his own reflections satisfied him that, if the leaders of his party asked him to return, he could not possibly refuse their invitation. But in what capacity? That was a simpler matter. An ex-Premier of seventy with forty years of public life behind him could not, he felt, consent to sit beneath his juniors. So Mr. Gladstone's mind was quite made up: he would be the next Prime Minister.

But the decision did not lie with him. The Queen had still to act; and Lord Beaconsfield advised her formally to send for Hartington, adding the slightly unusual com-

mendation of a Liberal leader that "he was in his heart a Conservative." There was the usual exchange of views on the subject of Mr. Gladstone, "who had done everything he could to vilify and weaken the Government in times of the greatest difficulty" and could hardly "be my Minister under such circumstances"; and Hartington was duly summoned. That paladin was not encouraging. Lord Beaconsfield had told her that he would be straightforward; and his candour was almost disconcerting, since he informed the Queen that no Government could stand without Mr. Gladstone, and that she had far better send for him at once. Indeed, when she unfolded her accustomed tale of Mr. Gladstone's wrong-doing—his violence in Opposition, his Russian sympathies, and the dreadful language he had been using about Austria—Lord Hartington tried to defend him and positively said that there was not so much difference between them as the Queen seemed to think. He even urged that, whatever Mr. Gladstone might have done against the Government, he had always been loyal to the Queen—a distinction of which the sovereign had become almost incapable, as she replied that she "did not doubt this, but could not quite separate his violence against my Government, when I was with them, doing all I could to prevent war, and to raise the position of my country, from causing me deep sorrow and anxiety." Then Hartington went off to Harley Street to go through the motions of asking Gladstone to serve under him. This odd manœuvre came as something of a shock to Gladstone. For Morley, who met him dining out that week, found him "pale, preoccupied, forced—not at all like himself." It was not pleasant to be told that the Queen declined to send for him—even though, as Mrs. Gladstone said, "it is all Dizzy." It might be; but at the same time it was highly unpleasing for an ex-Premier to feel himself excluded and to be asked to serve under Lord Hartington. His negative was categorical; and Hartington returned to Windsor, taking the amiable Granville with him.

Their audiences were not enlivening. The unpleasant

news of Mr. Gladstone's refusal to serve as a subordinate was duly intimated by Lord Hartington, who added that the public seemed to view his conduct in a more favourable light than the Queen, and that she had better send for him. This time she was more resigned, consoled with Hartington on his own deposition from the leadership, and asked him to assist her by controlling the new Prime Minister. The one bright spot was that Lord Hartington had heard that Mr. Gladstone's health was failing. Granville was sadly flattered, kissed her hand twice, and said he feared that he had lost some of her confidence, adding by way of encouragement that he did not think Mr. Gladstone would be able to go on for long. Like Hartington, he was requested to assist the Queen by controlling Mr. Gladstone. Both noblemen advised her that it would be just as well not to begin her interview with Mr. Gladstone by informing him that she had no confidence in him, though Granville thought she might say that she regretted some of his expressions and wished facts to remain unaltered.

Then Mr. Gladstone came to Windsor. Her courtesy was quite unbroken and, to his eye, the royal demeanour was "natural under effort." She asked if he would form a Government, and he answered that he would. A few names were mentioned, and he kissed hands formally on his appointment. Then she approached thin ice, remarking on the importance of leaving facts unaltered. He quite agreed, recalling how Sir Robert Peel had recognised an Indian annexation of which he had disapproved when in Opposition. The ice grew thinner, as she observed that she was going to be frank and tell him how some of his expressions had caused her pain. He praised her frankness and confessed that he had used strong language—stronger, perhaps, than he would have used if he had been a party-leader. The royal answer, delivered "with some good-natured archness," was that he must bear the consequences. He said that he was quite prepared to, adding that he hoped she would not find anything to disapprove of in his general tone, and that it would

be his endeavour to diminish her cares—or, at any rate, not to increase them. A parting intimation that at his age his term of office would be brief and his retirement early was quite to her taste ; and she reported happily to Beaconsfield that “ Mr. Gladstone looks very ill, very old and haggard and his voice feeble.”

The audience left him, “ all things considered . . . much pleased.” The Queen, it seemed to Mr. Gladstone, had been her gracious self with him, in spite of all Lord Beaconsfield’s enchantments—a shade constrained, perhaps ; but frank, good-natured, and at moments positively arch. Yet she had told him less than half of the unpleasant things that she was thinking. He did not know—though his two noble colleagues did—that she had no confidence in him, or that two members of his Cabinet had been requested to control him. And none of them had the least notion of her strong party leanings. For her private hopes had been confided to Lord Beaconsfield—a Liberal split, perhaps a coalition of Whigs and Tories, and then “ the Conservatives will come in stronger than ever.” Her hopes fixed on this happy consummation, she took steps to keep open her communications with Lord Beaconsfield—“ I shall always let you hear how I am and what I am doing, and you must promise to let me hear from you about you. I have many about me who will write to you and I hope you will to them—so that we are not cut off. That would be too painful.” It was improbable that their correspondence would be confined to friendly trivialities, since the same royal letter went on to press Lord Beaconsfield not to let Liberal ministers down lightly—“ Do not be indulgent, but make them feel what they have brought on themselves. Indulgence and forbearance after such disgraceful and unpatriotic attacks would not be right. It is not like an ordinary change of Govt.” But to Mr. Gladstone and the country that was precisely what it seemed to be. For nothing told them that it verged on treason to criticise Lord Beaconsfield’s diplomacy or that the next Prime Minister was to be an object of profound suspicion, with whom

his sovereign would decline to correspond "except on formal *official* matters." There was no warning of that interdict in his first audience. Yet the strange admission soon appeared in one of the Queen's letters ; and the recipient of her confidences on her relations with her ministers was the Leader of the Opposition. Mistrusting Gladstone, she relied slightly on his Whig colleagues ; but her real trust was in the Tories. Such was the transformation worked in her by Lord Beaconsfield ; and it was plain that all the pieces on the board were set for a most disagreeable game.

## VI

### ARM'S LENGTH

#### I

THE voyage opened in April, 1880 ; and the Queen, a reluctant and uncomfortable passenger, watched the assembling of the crew without enthusiasm. *Punch*, with a generous misreading of the facts, depicted a smiling figure in widow's weeds inspecting the new Cabinet and graciously remarking to its aged carpenter, " I see most of it is well seasoned—let us hope the new wood will stand well ! " That might have been her thought—it was the nation's—but the Queen actually felt nothing of the kind. For she had little confidence in any of her new surroundings. Had she not done her very best to escape from Mr. Gladstone altogether ? Yet that irrepressible old man was back once more beside her as Prime Minister ; and in case that office should prove insufficient for his energies, he was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer as well. True, he had seemed to take all that she had to say at their first audience extremely well, assuring her that he accepted all existing facts and that his bitterness against Lord Beaconsfield was past. Besides, he had informed her more than once that he did not expect to be long in office, as the burden was too great : that was one consolation. But though Lord Granville did his best to soothe her by reporting in the strictest confidence " several instances of Mr. Gladstone's desire to meet your Majesty's wishes," she could not see much sign of it. She had wished Lord Hartington to have the War Office, but now someone else was going there-instead ; and Lord Coleridge would have made a less formidable Chancellor than the majestic Selborne. But Mr. Gladstone had his reasons ; and as the Queen was on her best behaviour, she did not persist in her



objections. She even consented to Lord Ripon going to India as Viceroy, although she did "not think him sufficiently strong willed or firm . . . and would have preferred some one who has more determination and energy."

The best that she could hope for now was a Government of moderate Liberals controlled by Whig noblemen; and she enquired why Mr. Goschen's name was not included. At any rate, it was a comfort that Lord Beaconsfield at his farewell audience thought them extremely moderate, although he had a shrewd suspicion (which, in duty bound, he did not conceal from his sovereign) that something was being kept from her and that she had not yet been told the worst. She learned it soon enough, when Mr. Gladstone submitted "the names of such very advanced Radicals as Mr. Chamberlain and Sir C. Dilke," to say nothing of Mr. Mundella, "one of the most violent Radicals," and "the equally violent, blind Mr. Fawcett." True, only one of them was to be in the Cabinet; and Mr. Gladstone did his best for his alarming nominees, assuring her that Chamberlain "was very pleasing and refined in feelings and manner" and had never said a word against the royal family or "expressed Republican views," while Dilke repented of his youthful indiscretions, and Mundella "was a very religious man." As for Mr. Goschen, his disagreement with the party was really too profound for close co-operation to be possible. The Prime Minister was most persuasive, explaining that extremists had a way of becoming very moderate in office and pausing at intervals to ask if he did not weary her or take up too much of her time; and she found him "very courteous throughout, very grateful for the way in which I received his proposals." For she consented to them all, although it was disturbing to observe how very Radical the Government was growing. She said as much to Granville, who agreed, adding consolingly that it was "safer to have the advanced Radicals in office than out, detached from their surroundings." Indeed, that slightly supercilious nobleman thought Chamberlain "not so strong as is supposed, but an

admirable organiser, with pleasing manners," and genially assured the Queen's Private Secretary that "the Government is like bread sauce—made of two substantial elements. The few peppercorns are very obvious, and perhaps give a little flavour, but do not affect the character of the food."

But the Queen approached it without appetite. Dilke's explanations were accepted; but when the Prime Minister proposed to make Mr. Lowe a Viscount, she raised her first objection. His tactless opposition to the Royal Titles Bill stayed in her memory, and in the circumstances she felt that a mere Barony would meet the case. But the Prime Minister abounded in conclusive reasons; and though the Queen was unconvinced, she yielded gracefully. Indeed, her tone was not unpromising: "As the Queen is desirous to meet Mr. Gladstone's wishes—as he must have perceived in the manner in which she has hitherto waived all her objections to appointments which she could not regard with much satisfaction—she trusts that her readiness to do so may be reciprocated by him on other occasions."

But there were graver things to think of than Mr. Lowe's ennoblement; and she was soon pressing Granville to respect the fabric of Disraelian diplomacy. Then there was Ireland, which was beginning to look menacing, and the Russians, who always needed watching and never kept their word, to say nothing of South Africa, where Liberals might wish to disavow Sir Bartle Frere, the enterprising High Commissioner. A swift distraction was provided in the first weeks of the new Parliament by Mr. Bradlaugh. This earnest unbeliever, elected to the House of Commons, declined to take the oath; and the resulting controversy, in which the Queen and her Prime Minister were of one mind, was rich in lively incident. Parliament, indeed, gave her considerable cause for anxiety by interfering far too much, and Mr. Gladstone was invited to check "this democratic tendency." Responding with a thoughtful essay on the powers of the House of Commons, he was reminded that the Queen's objection was less to its interference with the

executive than to a tendency to trespass on her private actions, which should, she felt, be dealt with by "a sharp rebuke." For now her mind was much occupied with the difficulties of constitutional monarchy; even the Prime Minister's birthday greetings were acknowledged with a reference to the problems "of a Constitutional Sovereign especially—of a formal one." The bright dream of Disraelian autocracy had faded, and she was waking bravely to the cold light of day.

Her judgments on affairs were quite as shrewd as ever; the common sense that she had used against the tax on matches was still apparent in her comment on the new Budget—"The tax on beer she also regrets. . . . The richer classes who drink wine and who are not in any way restricted in their indulgences, can well afford to *pay* for wine. But the poor can ill afford any additional tax on what in many parts is about their only beverage"—although a more antique prejudice seemed to dictate her observation that "the elementary Education was of too high a standard." Her sense of the sanctity of obligations to landlords was slightly shocked by the prospect of an Irish Land Bill, and her alarms were all confided to Lord Granville; for, as she presently informed Lord Beaconsfield, "I write and telegraph very strongly to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs—for I *never* write except on formal *official* matters to the Prime Minister!" The recipient of these unusual confidences expressed a deep concern—"I grieve that your Majesty's relations with your Majesty's present Ministers are not those of entire confidence, but that is unhappily in the nature of things. It is not less to be deplored." (One almost catches the deep note of Lord Beaconsfield's distress.) "The realm suffers by your Majesty's reserve." This partial ostracism of the Prime Minister was a novel practice (and the royal announcement of it to the Leader of the Opposition was more novel still); and it is not altogether clear that Gladstone realised his exclusion from her confidence, since he had resumed his former habit of sending little extracts from his

reading which he thought might interest the Queen. Indeed, his audiences left him satisfied and recording that "nothing could be more kindly and agreeable than she was. . . . She seemed quite fair & willing to listen to reason. She had also cooked up an objection to Trevelyan ; but this melted 'like a mockery King of Snow.' However I promised to say one word to him about the old escapade." The royal tone, so far as he could judge, was not unpromising, if only they could both avoid causes of major disagreement.

Unhappily, events were too strong for them. The first threat to their fragile understanding came from South Africa, when ministers decided to recall Sir Bartle Frere. For the activities of that spirited proconsul were more in harmony with Lord Beaconsfield's imperial longings than with the more modest tastes of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues ; and the Queen was eloquent upon the injustice of this concession to "an extreme section of the House of Commons" and the resulting growth of "an impression that Governors abroad are *only* to expect support *at home* from *political* Allies or from that *party* which *nominated* them to their post." But though she disapproved, consent was not withheld ; and a slight indisposition of Mr. Gladstone's presently evoked the kindest expressions of royal anxiety about his health. They differed again, when he proposed Lord Derby for the Garter ; and this was scarcely to be wondered at, since Derby, who had commanded Gladstone's gratitude by disagreeing with Lord Beaconsfield to the point of resigning from his Cabinet and was now a Liberal convert, was hardly commended to the Queen by that circumstance. It was no merit in her eyes to have left Lord Beaconsfield in the lurch, and the royal pen was more than usually pointed in its dissection of his conduct. Gladstone was swift in his withdrawal, promptly substituting an innocuous duke ; and their precarious harmony resumed, only to be threatened once more as the Government disclosed an awkward tendency to be unkind to Turkey—"She will not consent to war with our old ally Turkey, whom the country always supported."

As Mr. Gladstone was to speak at the Lord Mayor's banquet she warned him to be very careful what he said, and he received the warning with due submission ; indeed, his performance earned him tempered thanks from Balmoral.

But the clouds began to gather nearer home ; for the Irish sky was full of menace. All her private correspondents were loud with warning, and she passed on their fears to Mr. Gladstone. But his replies seemed rather meagre ; it was unsatisfying to be told that the subject had been discussed in Cabinet. Lord Beaconsfield always told her more than that he used to let her know what all his colleagues thought and which of them was wrong and which was right and how the discussion had gone round the long table in Downing Street. But when she telegraphed to Mr. Gladstone for more particulars, he responded with a lucid analysis of the Irish Question and a marked absence of *personalia*. She warned him against the Land League ; and her warning was dutifully circulated to all his colleagues. As the news grew darker, the Queen made it plain that in her view Coercion should precede concessions ; and when Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain made speeches on the subject of the House of Lords, it seemed to justify her worst misgivings. Small wonder that her mind went back to happier days, to the distant Council forty years ago when Mr. Gladstone was sworn in at Claremont and Sir Robert Peel was there and the Duke and Lord Aberdeen—" *That* was an admirable Government ! " She had not seemed to think so then in the first anguish of her parting from Lord Melbourne. But now it gleamed across the years, a painful contrast with the anxieties of 1880, with an uncertain future in Ireland and South Africa, with Lord Beaconsfield writing her the most depressing letters, with dreadful Radicals in office and the continual problem of Mr. Gladstone. She did her best to get on with him, giving way upon nearly everything, and even brought herself to ask him and his wife to Windsor. The Prime Minister, almost painfully aware that he was not *persona grata* on private occasions, had touchingly expressed

to Granville "a dread lest your Majesty should feel, on account of his official position, an obligation to receive him socially, more than your Majesty would otherwise desire." He had been down to Sandringham to see the Prince of Wales ; but his doctor would not let him go to Windsor. They were not on easy terms, and his tendency to fill the Government with Radicals did little to improve things. She had consented to his first instalment ; Mr. Chamberlain was in the Cabinet and his associates in minor posts. Then Mr. G. O. Trevelyan, of whom she had unsatisfactory memories, was added ; and now there was to be another Radical recruit. This was too much ; and "the Queen hopes the next appointment to your Government will be made from the party of the Moderate Liberals." Had not two members of the Cabinet made speeches against the House of Lords ? Lord Beaconsfield wrote to inform her that he was getting ready to defend his country's threatened institutions "with only one purpose—the maintenance of the settled constitution of this country, of which the authority of the Crown, and its just Prerogatives, forms not the least important portion." It was all most alarming ; and the year went out upon her prayer "that the many clouds which now surround the political Horizon and her Empire may by God's blessing be dispelled and that Mr. Gladstone may be guided by Him to do what is just and right !"

## 2

On New Year's Day, 1881, the Queen's misgivings were confided to her Journal—"a poor Government, Ireland in a state of total lawlessness, and war at the Cape, of a very serious nature ! I feel very anxious and have no one to lean on." It was a dismal outlook, and in her survey she did not even spare herself :

"I feel how sadly deficient I am, and how over-sensitive and irritable, and how uncontrollable my temper is, when annoyed and hurt. But I am so overdone, so vexed, and in

such distress about my country, that that must be my excuse. I will pray daily for God's help to improve."

Such moods were rare with her ; for self-pity came more easily than self-examination. But the confession, cruel as it was, was not unjust. Her nerves were often raw ; the interminable loneliness, which had been mitigated by Disraeli's daring comradeship, resumed its grey dominion ; and as the days went by, she had nothing but her cares to think of. At such moments it was so easy to relieve her feelings with a hasty telegram to the Prime Minister or a summary refusal of some submission. But their precarious collaboration was sadly endangered by these impulses. For the royal objections must not be left unanswered ; serious proposals could not be lightly dropped ; and Mr. Gladstone was continually forced into argument. It could not be avoided, if he was to treat his sovereign with due respect—and he was nothing if not respectful of the Monarchy. Her views must not be ignored ; but if his country was to be governed according to his notion of its highest interests, he must convince the Queen. No other course was open to him. He must convince her, as he had convinced so many of his fellow-countrymen, by cogent and reiterated argument. That sad necessity rose between them, involving him in a semblance of continual debate with her decisions, which the Queen found distasteful in the extreme and contrasted bitterly with the unvarying compliance of Lord Beaconsfield. It was a tragedy, which could only end in mutual irritation, since the Queen seemed to find in her Prime Minister a ready controversialist rather than a collaborator, while Gladstone could not fail to be exasperated by the daily stream of royal communications, each waiting for its answer, which stood between him and the crowding problems of an uneasy world.

The first difficulty of the year arose over the terms of the Queen's Speech, in which it was proposed to state that the British occupation of Afghanistan would not be unduly pro-

longed. The Queen demurred ; a telegram to Mr. Gladstone announced her strong objections ; and Sir William Harcourt and Lord Spencer, who were at Osborne, had a most unpleasant time. (The royal pen recorded a Council meeting, in which " I spoke to no one, and the Ministers nearly tumbled over each other going out.") But the Cabinet met her with an assurance which the Queen found adequate, and Mr. Gladstone's deep regret was conveyed in a manner that commanded her entire satisfaction. The incident was closed, but not before she had sent Prince Leopold to consult Lord Beaconsfield upon the constitutional position, receiving from that source the highly questionable doctrine that " the principle . . . that the Speech of the Sovereign is only the Speech of the Ministers is a principle not known to the British Constitution. It is only a piece of Parliamentary gossip."

But when Gladstone found himself at issue with the forces of disorder in the House of Commons, her sympathy was ready, and the royal influence was used to mobilise Conservative support for the Government. She even pressed the Prime Minister to spare himself the labour of his nightly letter from the Treasury Bench after late sittings protracted until dawn by Irish obstruction. The dismal course of operations in South Africa saddened her greatly, although she sturdily refused to admit that Laing's Nek was more than a " repulse—(*not* defeat) for the attack seems to have been most brilliant." But Majuba did not admit of argument, though she was anxious that in the ensuing negotiations there should be no admission of weakness. Her letters rang with warnings against avoidable concessions, which might " encourage the Agitators . . . while the *Natives* losing *all faith in our firmness of purpose* will *never* cease to give us trouble—& there will be fresh wars—more expense—& above all more precious lives lost ! " It was all a most depressing contrast with the halcyon days when Lord Beaconsfield moved fleets and armies up and down the world and nobody was hurt ; and Mr. Gladstone's unexciting



settlements, by which foreigners were left to govern their own countries, were little to her taste.

But major matters seemed to loom less in their intercourse than the proposal that Sir Garnet Wolseley should be made a peer. That enterprising soldier, whom a miscellaneous career of conquest in Canada, Ashanti, and South Africa had endeared to his fellow-countrymen (though less, perhaps, to all his fellow-soldiers) as "Our Only General," was a strenuous practitioner of Army reform. Contemporary slang proclaimed "all Sir Garnet" as a synonym of perfection; and the trim, bemedalled figure of the "modern major-general" was applauded nightly through 1880 in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Not that he was a Liberal in politics; for his diary devoutly hailed "the Queen's birthday. God bless her and preserve her from the dangers in which Mr. Gladstone's policy is certain sooner or later to involve the country. She has been taught by those who dislike me to regard me as a Radical. I think she would change her opinion if she read my journal." But his professional opinions were advanced, a circumstance that hardly smoothed relations with the Duke of Cambridge, who retained Crimean predilections; and the Commander-in-Chief viewed his Quartermaster-General with unconcealed misgivings. The Government, proposing to embark on a career of daring innovation which included the substitution of county designations for the historic regimental numbers and the abolition—painful to military tailors—of regimental facings, conceived a notion that the progress of these measures through the House of Lords would be facilitated by the presence of an expert in sympathy with the reforms. So Sir Garnet's name was submitted for a peerage. But its reception was highly inauspicious, the Queen expressing deep surprise, complaining that he constantly opposed the Duke of Cambridge to the point of insubordination, and repeating "most emphatically that she will NOT approve of a Peerage being conferred on Sir Garnet Wolseley." Returning bravely to the charge, the Prime Minister restated his

theme with persuasive variations ; but there was no perceptible diminution of the royal emphasis in a reply, which Gladstone passed on to Granville with slightly humorous helplessness—"Here is a 'no surrender'—'non possumus'—nail the colours to the mast, break the bridges and burn the boats, letter!" What were ministers to do? Mr. Gladstone used his best endeavours to improve the Queen's opinion of Sir Garnet. A further argument (with aid in drafting from the tactful Granville) was sent to Windsor ; but all was to no purpose, each party to the controversy remaining wholly unconvinced of the other's merits.

Larger issues began to rise between them, when Irish Land impelled the Duke of Argyll to resign. For the Queen pressed Gladstone to modify his scheme in deference to the doubts of such supporters and wrote to his resigning colleague enquiring eagerly "what your views and objections are, as it will be very valuable to me to know." But tragedy descended on her ; Lord Beaconsfield was failing fast ; and a stream of messengers from Windsor came to Curzon Street. Even the unaccustomed figure of Mr. Gladstone was on the doorstep—"Went up to inquire for Lord B. . . . May the Almighty be near his pillow. . . . Went up again to inquire for Lord B." But he was soon past all enquiries ; and the Prime Minister wrote offering a public funeral even before the Queen suggested it. Her grief was painful ; and this fresh bereavement seemed to leave her lonelier than ever. Gladstone's condolences were manly—"Mr. Gladstone would not seek, nor could he earn, Your Majesty's regard by dissembling the amount or character of the separation between Lord Beaconsfield and himself. But it does not in any degree blind him to the extraordinary powers of the deceased statesman, or to many remarkable qualities, in regard to whom Mr. Gladstone, well aware of his own marked inferiority, can only desire to profit by a great example." The Queen was grateful ; his speech on the proposal of a monument earned her thanks—"She has been *much gratified* by it. . . . She *knows* (and can *judge* by her own feelings) that Lord Beaconsfield's

friends are *very* much gratified by Mr. Gladstone's fine speech, which will abound greatly to his honour"—and Mr. Gladstone was rewarded by royal hopes that "he is better & will not stay up too late at the House." The Queen's suggestion of a baronetcy for the dead statesman's brother was promptly accepted by the Prime Minister. But when he sought to inaugurate the new era of harmony by a revival of the Wolseley peerage, he fared no better than before.

Affairs apart, he did his best, celebrating her Accession day with a comparison to Queen Elizabeth that would have done credit to his predecessor, and interesting her in a deserving movement for the suppression of gaming at Monte Carlo. But his attitude to Irish landlords alarmed her gravely; and he was inclined to resent interference by the House of Lords in a tone which moved her to inform Lord Granville "that high-handed dictator style of Mr. Gladstone will *not* do." There was more trouble at the Horse Guards about Sir Garnet; and when the Prime Minister insisted on another Radical as Under-Secretary, the customary protest moved him to an unusual expression of his feelings. For he circulated the royal letter to three of his colleagues with an outspoken minute:—

"I think this intolerable. It is by courtesy only that these appointments are made known to H.M."

It was unlike his old restraint to make his meaning quite so plain. But even Mr. Gladstone's patience began to fray under the perpetual friction. For it was humiliating to try so hard and to make quite so little progress.

After one audience that year his diary confessed: "She is as ever perfect in her courtesy but as to confidence she holds me now at arm's length." That was the key-note. They were at arm's length; and there seemed little prospect of reducing the distance that separated them. It was most disheartening for Gladstone, and he soon began to lose all inclination to make further efforts. For a later entry recorded "much civility . . . but I am always outside ar

iron ring, and without any desire, had I the power, to break it through." But even the desire had left him now.

## 3

Yet she could still write him a charming letter, when he announced the birth of a grandchild in the first week of 1882. His audiences that year passed off without misadventure ; but there was a growing tendency on both sides to avoid the real subjects that were in their minds. He had already found her " frank & kind as usual, avoiding all sore & tender places." Kind, perhaps ; but scarcely frank, since her avoidance of sore places was a plain admission that there were topics upon which the Queen and her Prime Minister could hardly touch with safety. Before the year was out, he was privileged to enjoy " a free & kindly conversation on the see of Canterbury " ; but of what use was it to spend the afternoon exchanging amiable commonplaces over the Rev. Randall Davidson's opinion that Bishop Benson would be the best successor to Archbishop Tait, when both their minds were full of Ireland and Egypt ? His diary recorded a further interview on " most difficult ground, but aided by her beautiful manners we got over it better than might have been expected." Decorum was preserved ; but perfect manners were a slender bridge across the gulf between the sovereign and her Prime Minister.

The gulf, alas ! was widening. Gladstone might do his best to reassure her as to his faith in the imperial connection with Ireland and the invariable soundness of his views on royal grants ; he was still making efforts to satisfy her upon Dilke's recantation of his juvenile republicanism and Mr. Chamberlain's unhappy aptitude for pointed sayings of a most disturbing character. But the Prime Minister's tendency to make excuses for the Irish—and, worse still, concessions to them—became more evident with every week that passed ; and when tragedy stalked across the body of a murdered Chief Secretary in Phoenix Park, the Queen was loud in her outcries against Mr. Gladstone, " backed as he

will be by his *evil genius* Mr. Chamberlain," and "this dreadfully Radical Government which contains many thinly-veiled *Republicans*." Her worst fears were justified, and she seemed to see him now for what he was—"this most dangerous man. . . . The mischief Mr. Gladstone does is *incalculable*; instead of stemming the current and downward course of Radicalism, which he could do *perfectly*, he *heads and encourages it*." That was the disastrous thing about him: the Queen's convictions stayed very much as the Disraelian mould had left them, but her Prime Minister's were moving with the times—those dreadful times of the "Invincibles" and Mr. Parnell and O'Donovan Rossa and the dynamiters and the uncomfortably creeping tide of Radicalism. How heartily she wished him out of office now; indeed, she said so to Lord Hartington. But all hopes of his retirement seemed to have faded; his health had obstinately ceased to fail, and the indomitable old man positively seemed to thrive on difficulties. Lord Granville made a most disheartening report that the Prime Minister had told him he had never felt so well at the end of a session; and the more insoluble the Irish Question, the more impracticable it became for Gladstone to retire, leaving the problem unresolved. It fascinated him; he had always felt himself to have a mission towards Ireland; and the darker Ireland loomed upon the Queen's horizon, the more certain it became that Mr. Gladstone would continue to loom there as well.

That year a further problem was added to the witches' brew confronting British statesmanship in 1882. For Egypt swerved towards disintegration; and an awkward possibility of European intervention appeared. At first it seemed as though there would be combined action by Great Britain and France, and the Queen shrewdly advised that "we sh<sup>d</sup> try & get disentangled from the French." Then the proposed castigation of Arabi brought suggestions of Turkish participation; but she had learnt the Gladstonian lesson well enough by now to mistrust the Turk, and the Queen hoped "that we shall get clear of the Turks all together for

she is *convinced* that they w<sup>d</sup> join Arabi against us." The Cabinet, which had decided with profound reluctance (and the loss of Mr. Bright) to let the fleet bombard the rebels in the forts of Alexandria, resolved still more unwillingly to send out a British army and restore order in the country. As usual, Sir Garnet Wolseley was to command, adding Egyptian laurels to his variegated wreath ; the Guards were off to Tel-el-Kebir, and the Prince of Wales was anxious to go with them, positively threatening that, if leave were refused, he should resign his commission and go out as a civilian. But the delights of active service were not for heirs apparent in 1882 ; the Queen appealed to Mr. Gladstone, who was firm in her support ; and the Cabinet's authority was invoked to keep the Prince at home. But the Duke of Connaught, who was a serving soldier, went out with his brigade ; and Granville's watchful tact suggested that enquiries on the subject by the Prime Minister would have a good effect at Court. A reference by Mr. Gladstone to the Duke's achievements in the field much gratified the Queen ; but the war in Egypt did little to improve her opinion of Liberal ministers. For though they took the British flag to Egypt, they were reluctant empire-builders ; and the Queen watched with deep misgivings their tendency to restrict the military men. Besides, they seemed to wish to bring the troops home prematurely after their brief, victorious campaign. That deeply exercised the Queen, who could not forget (and did not refrain from an unpleasant reminder to Mr. Gladstone) "*the unfortunate result of the haste with which our Troops were brought back from Zululand & South Africa, & the consequent humiliation & loss of prestige w<sup>h</sup> ensued in the Transvaal.—This sh<sup>d</sup> be a warning to us in the present instance.*" Such counsels were unwelcome and only served to emphasise the gulf between them.

For the gulf was widening, and even Gladstone's patience was a little strained by the constant necessity for argument. Divergence upon Irish matters moved her to a steady rain

of communications ; and once the Prime Minister was stung into recording " another fidgety Telegram from Balmoral " and a comparison of his royal mistress to a particularly trying colleague " who used to see *one* side of a question so clearly." It was his duty to convince the Queen ; but the duty was manifestly growing onerous. Mr. Gladstone had not, had never any difficulty in giving reasons for his actions ; vast numbers of his countrymen found them conclusive ; but if the Queen persistently declined to see them, he became a little desperate. Her attitude about the troops in Egypt struck him as supremely unreasonable ; and he was moved to quite unusual candour, writing to Hartington :

" I must own that I think the Queen's resolute attempts to disturb & impede the reduction of the army in Egypt, are (to use a plain word) intolerable. It is my firm intention not to give in, so far as I am personally concerned, for a moment to proceedings almost as unconstitutional as they are irrational ; though the unreasonableness of her ideas is indeed such that it is entitled to the palm in comparison with their other characteristics."

Given his veneration of the throne, it took a great deal to evoke such comments from Mr. Gladstone. But as he faced his daily task of dealing with the Queen, a mood of despair began to settle on him. Early in the next year he was walking with Rosebery at Hawarden and, in the intervals of throwing his stick at a delinquent dog for digging up the flowers, exclaimed with positive ferocity that the Queen alone was enough to kill any man.

That was an unhappy mood for the transaction of their multifarious business. There was still a mild exchange of little gifts and courtesies between them ; a candle-lamp was graciously received ; and when Dean Wellesley died, her melancholy interest in the event was amply satisfied by Mr. Gladstone's narrative of his last moments and the obsequies at Strathfieldsaye. After the victory in Egypt Sir Garnet Wolseley's peerage went through triumphantly ;

## 4

In the first weeks of 1883 the burden of affairs began to tell on Mr. Gladstone ; his sleep deserted him ; and a royal warning to be careful what he said in Scotland was answered by the welcome intelligence that his speaking tour was cancelled by doctor's orders. The Queen's solicitude increased when he took refuge on the Riviera, and her anxiety was genuine. Granville was asked to press him to take a thorough rest, and the Queen suggested in the kindest way that a peerage would reduce the strain on the Prime Minister. His reply was unconvinced, but grateful :—

" It is really most kind of the Queen to testify such an interest and the question is how to answer her. . . . I suppose the substance would be to express my gratitude, & say that thus encouraged by her I shall not scruple to open the subject if I should find reason to believe it would be beneficial but that viewing my age & all other circumstances I do not at present anticipate it."

Conveyed by Granville, this answer made an excellent impression ; and " the Queen is glad Mr. Gladstone took the offer of the Peerage so well." She seemed to be a little shy of him, even to realise that he needed managing ; and in her new care about his health there was plain evidence of an admission that, where so many of his colleagues were deplorable, she almost needed Mr. Gladstone.

But her anxieties were groundless. An eyewitness at Cannes reported that the invalid had walked eight miles uphill in pouring rain—" the last 6 without any rest excepting occasional stopping for emphasis and enforcement "—and the voluble pedestrian was soon back at work, quite unimpaired and full of arguments about the Balkans and South Africa and the removal of the Duke of Wellington's statue from Hyde Park Corner. His consolations, when she lost her faithful Brown, were almost Disraelian ; and when Mr. Chamberlain made another of his dreadful speeches, the



Prime Minister warned him quite sharply that "all that belongs to the person and family of the sovereign are specially in our charge and are to be watched over by us with careful and even jealous respect." He was most obliging about appointing Mr. Randall Davidson to be Dean of Windsor ; and they were in friendly correspondence on the strictly unofficial subjects of St. Francis de Sales (whom Mr. Gladstone felt to "belong to the more modern, and less healthy and manly type of saintship") and the excesses of Continental anti-Semitism, upon which he had inspired the publication of a review article that pleased the Queen and, in the royal judgment, "shows up some German Professors very well." But there was no perceptible increase in their harmony upon official topics. For his sovereign was still insisting under military advice that she "feels very strongly that the withdrawal of our troops from Cairo and Egypt must be put off, she believes *sine die* . . . Sir E. Wood can confirm this better than anyone." Gladstone, who always found her martial mood peculiarly distasteful, passed on the royal note to Granville with the bleak comment : "A curious letter—after forty odd years experience of Rule, from a warm admirer of Sir R. Peel and of Lord Aberdeen!" Granville's sole rejoinder was, "Alas!" and two heads were sadly shaken over the Queen's apostasy.

A further incident clouded their cordiality that autumn. Mr. Gladstone took his holiday with a select party (including the Poet Laureate) in one of Sir Donald Currie's admirable liners. Crowds shouted "Gladstone" at every railway station, all the way from Chester to Barrow ; and roars of "Tennyson" and "Gladstone" from the shore cheered their departure. A few days of strenuous conversation and gentle sightseeing brought them to Kirkwall, where it occurred to Mr. Tennyson that he would like a day in Copenhagen. Denmark was not so far away ; and, deep in literary talk, they crossed the North Sea. From that moment their modest cruise became a royal progress. The King of

Denmark asked them to dinner to meet the Czar, the King and Queen of Greece, the Princess of Wales, and a galaxy of royal relatives. This hospitality was returned at a lunch-party on board the liner. Guns roared salutes ; flags fluttered everywhere ; the company drank everybody's health ; and Mr. Gladstone made a little speech. But the echoes had not died away before another royal note fell on his ear. On reaching Denmark he had written to the Queen reporting his excursion and apologising for his omission to ask formal leave to land on foreign soil. The consequences of his lapse were quite unpredictable, as this cheerful intimation reached his sovereign in the least of holiday moods. " Her unfeigned astonishment at Mr. Gladstone's want of *all knowledge*, apparently, of what is due to the Sovereign he serves " was conveyed to Granville all unsweetened, together with a royal commination on " this *escapade*." Indeed, a casual reader of the Queen's letter might have been excused for believing the Prime Minister had been guilty of eloping with a lady-in-waiting rather than the milder crime of touching at a foreign port in company with all his family and Mr. Tennyson. But this reproof was not enough ; a sharp letter intimated her displeasure to Mr. Gladstone in terms which (he confessed to Granville) " made me rather angry . . . I should call the letter—for the first time—somewhat unmannerly." The Prime Minister accepted the rebuke with due humility, deploring the unpremeditated consequences of his breach of etiquette and pleading gravely that " increasing weariness of mind, under public cares for which he feels himself less and less fitted, may have blunted the faculty of anticipation, with which he was never very largely endowed." If it was a defect of Mr. Gladstone's to be unduly formal with the Queen, it could hardly be felt that this experiment in informality had been conspicuously successful.

But the excursion had one happy consequence ; for Mr. Tennyson was made a peer. The Bard's taste for impressive headgear slightly alarmed Gladstone, who enquired in jocular concern whether he could be accessory to introducing

that hat into the House of Lords. But when he submitted the proposal, the Queen consented graciously, and the Laureate was duly ennobled. Then they returned to the absorbing round of official business and to the Queen's uneasy feeling that Mr. Gladstone was not nearly firm enough—"She has no doubt that Lord Granville feels as Lord Palmerston did; who with all his many faults, had the honour and power of his country strongly at heart, and so had Lord Beaconsfield. *But* she does *not* feel that Mr. Gladstone has. Or at least he puts the House of Commons and party *first*; thinking *no doubt* that he *is* doing what is best by keeping this country out of everything and swallowing offences. . . . As regards *Egypt* and the Troops, the Queen will not give her consent to their *withdrawal* from *Egypt*. . . . She fears Mr. Gladstone and Lord Hartington are inclined to be *weak upon it*." Within a month a wavering advance against the Mahdi was made by an Egyptian army under Hicks Pasha. The great square of unsteady soldiers moved slowly forward into Kordofan with their starving camels. They had no water and false guides; and in the depths of a great forest south of El Obeid a rush of Mahdists blotted them out. If the Egyptians could not hold the Sudan against the Mahdi, it would be best for them to evacuate the interior; and the Government resolved to advise them in that sense. The Queen discussed the point with Mr. Gladstone; and everyone seemed quite agreed upon evacuation, Sir Evelyn Wood writing from Cairo that "the happiest result would be that Egypt should lose all the interior country south of Assouan."

The tragedy in Kordofan left the main current of the Queen's correspondence undisturbed; and an approach to harmony with Mr. Gladstone permitted them to touch on less official topics—old memories of Claremont and the quotation from Byron which the Poet Laureate had kindly furnished for the pedestal of John Brown's statue—and there were gracious enquiries after Mrs. Gladstone and an exchange of good wishes for 1884.

## 5

The year opened on their decision to withdraw the Egyptians from their untenable possessions in the Sudan. The Cabinet felt no doubts ; and the Queen was clear that "as the Soudan cannot be reconquered we must be prepared to take the responsibility of the act," though she retained her tendency to scold ministers for "half measures and indecision." But the forefront of politics seemed likely to be filled by a proposal to extend the franchise ; and the despatch of General Gordon with instructions "to go up and evacuate" seemed a small matter. This noble eccentric, whose renunciation of the world verged on the suicidal, was speeding southward across Europe on his way to Egypt, while the Queen lent Mr. Gladstone an advance copy of *More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands* (which he read with the reflection that "it is innocence itself"). She was half inclined to claim credit for Gordon's mission, and her impatience with the Government was freely expressed to Sir Evelyn Wood—"Why this was *not* done long ago and why the right thing is never done till it is absolutely extorted from those who are in authority, is inexplicable to the Queen. Over and over again she has urged by letter and by cypher that energetic measures were necessary ; but *not* till the whole country became alarmed—and, she flatters herself also, in deference to her very strong pressure—was anything done." It was not altogether plain what energetic measures were required by an Egyptian evacuation of the Sudan. But the Queen's martial temper was uneasy in retreat ; and when the military authorities pressed an unwilling Cabinet for a punitive expedition in the Eastern Sudan, she was strong for "a demonstration of strength & show & determination" in the interests of British prestige in the East. Gladstone passed on the royal letter a little wearily to Granville—"I send you herewith . . . a letter from the Queen : Horse Guards all over . . . Gordon is now the key to the whole position and everything

shows the great importance of the answers we may expect shortly to arrive from him." The courtly Granville suggested almost disrespectfully in his reply that "the Queen should ask the Empress Eugenie, whether she now thinks she was right in urging her Husband to undertake the Mexican, as well as the Franco-German War." The Government, at any rate, were firm in their refusal to be drawn into unnecessary wars, although a strictly limited operation on the Red Sea coast elicited the Queen's applause.

Meanwhile, the nation's chosen instrument had reached Khartoum; and Baring's desk in Cairo was littered with the daily sheaf of telegrams from Gordon. That perfect functionary had begun to fear the worst, when Gordon on his way through Cairo launched a particularly daring proposal founded, as he announced, upon a "mystic feeling." Sir Evelyn Baring, whose *forte* was public finance, was remarkably immune from mystic feelings; and when Gordon began to use official telegrams as a running chronicle of passing fancies, bewilderment increased at Cairo and in Downing Street. It had always been his way to put all his moods on paper; readers of his earlier letters from Central Africa were warned that they "are my journal and impressions of the moment. I cannot be bound by them. . . . These letters are my journal, so do not nail me down to anything I may say I propose to do." Besides, he was a little apt to claim a right to "do what I like, and what God in His mercy may direct me to do." For, to his deep religious sense, "He is the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, and I am only His useless agent, by whom He deigns to work His will." Such a faith, however admirable, in divine inspiration might prove incompatible with strict obedience to orders. Not that Gordon's official masters were exacting. Indeed, they relied almost touchingly upon his judgment; but that judgment was itself sadly impaired by his fatalism, by a religious tendency to resign himself happily to the decrees of Providence. He had rejoiced in it for years, writing that "it

is a delightful thing to be a fatalist." His passive creed was stated in a vivid parable :

" We are pianos, events play on us. Gladstone is no more important in the events of life than we are ; the importance is, how he acts when played on. So is it with the bedridden woman ; the angels and powers watch her and Gladstone alike ; both are equally interesting ; that broken cup is the same as the Irish troubles."

Gordon had been sent to Khartoum in order to wind up the Egyptian occupation and effect a prompt withdrawal. But with such mental habits it was a little doubtful how far he could bring himself to interfere with the course of events or, if he did, what action he proposed to take. It was impossible to tell from his innumerable telegrams. Did they mean what they said ? Plainly some of them did not, since their successors contradicted them with distressing frequency. And, worst of all, it was by no means certain that he would do as he was told.

On the way up to Khartoum he was tolerably clear that " all will be settled in six months." But as he settled into the big palace by the river, doubts began to grow on him. True, *The Times* correspondent was quite positive that " the holding of Khartoum is *bosh*." But Gordon was not so sure. His busy mind was haunted by a nightmare vision of the Mahdi in odious triumph and the decline of British prestige throughout the East. Besides, there were his people in Khartoum to be provided for ; it was not easy to arrange a Biblical migration of Egyptian traders and officials, even while the road was open. But if he waited until the road was closed, who could foresee the consequences ? There were, of course, his orders ; but they left him a good deal of latitude ; and he gradually drifted with a quiet conscience to his desperate resolve to " smash the Mahdi." That would not be easy, so long as ministers declined to send out an expedition for the purpose. But if Providence required it, he must change their minds for them. No doubt they

would be angry—"I expect Her Majesty's Government are in a precious rage with me for holding out and forcing their hand"—but that could not be helped.

Such was the formidable collaborator adopted by the Cabinet in January, 1884. The Queen approved; the Horse Guards and the Opposition united in concurrence; and the entire press was unanimous in their support. A grateful nation cheered the picturesque expedient of "Chinese Gordon for the Sudan"; and the only fault found by their royal critic was that they had not sent him sooner. But the choice, so universally approved, turned out to be a profound error. Gladstone confessed it later:

"Clearly we made a mistake, great but greatly excusable; the cause was insufficient knowledge of our man, whom we rather took on trust from the public impressions, & from newspaper accounts, which were probably not untrue, but so far from the whole truth that we were misled."

A further diagnosis put the point more clearly still:

"Gordon was a hero, and a hero of heroes; but we ought to have known that a hero of heroes is not the proper person to give effect at a distant point, and in most difficult circumstances, to the views of ordinary men. It was unfortunate that he should claim the hero's privilege by turning upside down and inside out every idea and intention with which he had left England, and for which he had obtained our approval."

The choice of General Gordon was the first (and perhaps the last) mistake in Mr. Gladstone's policy in the Sudan. After that tragic error the rest was almost bound to follow; and since the fatal consequences left an indelible mark on his relations with the Queen, it may be noted that the initial blunder was committed with her complete approval.

The Queen was anxious from the start. In February she "trembles for General Gordon's safety. If anything befalls *him* the result will be awful." This mood inclined her to support all the demands that emanated from his busy

telegraph. The first articulate request from Khartoum was for the nomination of a notorious slave-trader (who was to be made K.C.M.G. for the occasion) as his successor. It was a dramatic *coup* in the spirit of his own performances in China and would provide an alternative to Mahdist government in the Sudan. But the Cabinet was unconvinced, feeling that "Zebir would not be regarded by public opinion in this country as qualified for such an office"; and there was not the slightest doubt that the appointment would have roused opposition far beyond the pious circles normally controlled by Exeter Hall. The Queen was highly indignant, instructing her Secretary to telegraph that the decisive factor should be "*the good and permanent tranquillity of Egypt . . . and not public opinion HERE which is fickle and changeable.*" Her indignation rose, as she warned ministers that "the Queen will *hold* the Government responsible for any sort of misfortune which *will* happen," though she admitted candidly that "British troops cannot be sent" (favouring an Indian contingent). But she continued to insist that the Prime Minister had told her "Gordon must be trusted and supported and yet what he asked for repeatedly nearly five weeks ago has been refused. If not only for humanity's sake, for the honour of the Government and the nation he must not be abandoned." There was no question of abandoning him in March, 1884, with the road wide open from Khartoum to Cairo. But as the spring went by and Gordon apparently declined to use it, they drifted into an unhappy argument upon the theme of expeditions, which were palpably superfluous for the relief of Khartoum (since it was not yet besieged), but were designed by his resourceful mind for "smashing up" the Mahdi. Lord Hartington insisted doggedly that "General Gordon certainly when he left England distinctly understood that no British troops would be employed in relieving him or the garrisons and was confident of his ability to accomplish his task without such assistance." That was unchallengeable, so long as he confined his task to the comparatively humble mission of evacu-



ating the Sudan. But if he enlarged it to include the destruction of the Mahdi and the establishment of an alternative administration, what limit could be set to his requirements? It dawned upon the Cabinet in April that "General Gordon, who was dispatched on a mission essentially pacific, has found himself, from whatever cause, unable to prosecute it effectually, and has now proposed the use of military means which may fail and which if they succeed may be found to mean a new subjugation of the Soudan, the very consummation which it was the object of Gordon's mission to avert." That was unchallengeable too. But such distinctions were beyond the Queen (and an increasing number of her subjects), who merely saw a lonely hero in a beleaguered city. Her tone rose as the weeks went by; and a discussion with the French in May upon the limits to be set to the British occupation of Egypt did nothing to improve her opinion of the Government. Once more her ministers seemed far too ready to make concessions to foreign insolence. That was the worst of Mr. Gladstone; and an indignant sovereign pointed his duty with familiar emphasis.

The summer passed, and Khartoum had very largely ceased to be an object of anxiety, though consultations were inaugurated with the military authorities on the subject of the route to be followed by a relief expedition, should one be required. But the matter was not pressing, since the Cabinet in June saw "no fresh reason to anticipate the necessity of an expedition for the relief of General Gordon." Not that it could have started, since the military disagreed about its route. Always prone to demand swift decisions from civilian ministers, the soldiers were far more deliberate in taking decisions for which they would themselves be responsible. There were at least three ways of getting to Khartoum; each had its advocates; and all that summer "the battle of the routes" was fought with departmental gusto. But after midsummer a graver problem faced the Government, when the House of Lords threw out the Franchise Bill. The Queen was quick to note the danger of a

conflict between the Houses and deplored "the strong language used by the Prime Minister." Gladstone, with circumstantial gratitude, acknowledged the royal letter, "in which Your Majesty has, with a condescending frankness, expressed regret at strong language, presumed to have been used by him," and retorted blandly that the Tories had begun it. She was inclined to think the House of Lords should be permitted to force a General Election, but agreed that there should be an autumn session, provided ministers took care not to make irritating speeches in the recess. The Queen argued stoutly that "the House of Lords . . . is believed to represent the true feeling of the Country," a sentiment which Mr. Gladstone noted grimly as being "rather in the nature of an argument for the abolition of the House of Commons: not that she means this but it is what her argument leads to. . . . There is no use in a controversy with her infallibility, but perhaps, without bringing in the Cabinet, I ought respectfully to demur to the sentiment I have quoted and to state my conviction that the Monarchy ought not to be and need not to be mixed up in controversies such as that which now appears to be within the lines of probability." This line was faithfully adhered to; and he was kept busy writing explanations of provocative speeches by his more impulsive followers. Before the House rose for the autumn, the military managed to make up their minds upon the route to Khartoum; money was voted for an expedition; and in August Lord Wolseley was appointed to command. In view of possible communications with the Tory leaders, the Queen had been provided with a note of the Government's position on the Franchise question; and distinguished emissaries began to flit about between the country houses. Mr. Gladstone's progress through Scotland was less to her taste; and though his own impression of his utterances was that they had "moved . . . upon the lines of brevity and commonplace," she was displeased by "his *constant* speeches at every station, without which the country *would not* be excited. . . . The Queen

is *utterly* disgusted with his *stump* oratory—so unworthy of his position—almost under her very nose.” But his attitude to the negotiations for a settlement upon the Franchise compelled her gratitude ; and Lord Granville was informed that the Prime Minister had made himself “ particularly agreeable ” at Balmoral.

The autumn passed in these pursuits, the tactful Ponsonby weaving a web of concord between the party leaders. Sometimes the Queen confessed that Mr. Gladstone seemed “ over anxious for the susceptibilities of the Liberal party ” ; and he was not always equal to the exacting task of restraining Mr. Chamberlain. But when it came to the negotiations, Lord Salisbury proved to be quite as difficult ; and Gladstone earned royal praise for his conciliatory tone. A settlement was reached at last ; the Queen breathed her relief ; there was a rain of compliments all round ; and his sovereign hoped the Prime Minister would take a change of air. In the ensuing calm there was almost a shy resumption of their former harmony, Mr. Gladstone sending her a German article to read and the Queen reciprocating with congratulations on a family event. Indeed, his record of an audience that winter recalled happier days, since he “ sat an hour with the Queen, who is in exuberant good humour over the Franchise question, & has been very useful.” But their harmony was threatened by a distant shadow. Two thousand miles away Lord Wolseley, feeling his way up the Nile, sat reading a tiny scrap in Gordon’s handwriting : “ Kartum all right.” But was it ?

## 6

In the first week of 1885 the Desert Column started on its dash from Korti ; and as it vanished into the hot distances of the Bayuda Desert, the Queen and Mr. Gladstone were corresponding calmly on the approaching marriage of Princess Beatrice and the succession to Sir Moses Montefiore’s baronetcy (her views on Jewish honours had grown more liberal in recent years). The Prime Minister was sleeping

badly, and "the Queen hopes soon to hear that Mr. Gladstone is better. His absence now w<sup>ld</sup> be serious." A harassed British square beat off the Mahdists at Abu-Klea; and the Queen was sending Mr. Gladstone a portrait of her handsome son-in-law. Lord Hartington's objections to her telegraphing congratulations direct to the army annoyed her slightly—"The Queen *has the right* to telegraph congratulations and enquiries *to any one*, and won't stand dictation. She *won't* be a *machine*. But the Liberals always wish to make her *feel THAT*, and she *won't accept it*." Her next use of the telegraph was anything but mechanical, since news came in the first week of February that a battered steamer had forced its way under a heavy fire into sight of Gordon's headquarters and found no flag flying. For the tide had closed over Khartoum; and the Queen's grief was tragic. She telegraphed her agonised displeasure to three ministers without troubling to conceal her indignation from their subordinates in the decent obscurity of cipher. The step was scarcely inadvertent, since she recorded it in her Journal, noting that she had "telegraphed *en clair* to Mr. Gladstone, Lord Granville, and Lord Hartington." Her message to the Prime Minister was painfully explicit:—

"These news from Khartoum are frightful and to think that all this might have been prevented and many precious lives saved by earlier action is too fearful."

His reply was grave—an acknowledgment of "Your Majesty's Telegram *en clair*," a confession of his inability "to follow the conclusion which Your Majesty has been pleased thus to announce," a reminder that the soldiers had taken some time making up their minds which route to follow, and a mournful iteration that "our proper business was the protection of Egypt, that it was never in military danger from the Mahdi and that the more prudent course would have been to provide it with adequate frontier defences, and to assume no responsibility for the lands beyond the desert." But his private secretary made a sharp complaint to Pon-

sonby that the sovereign had subjected her ministers to public rebuke ; and when the tactful General did his best to explain the royal action, his mistress was displeased, and in his answer Ponsonby was reduced to explaining away his own explanation. The last word was with Mr. Gladstone, though, in a majestic note in which " he must concede that her Majesty is the best judge of what to say and how to say it."

In this unhappy mood they settled down to consideration of the next step in the Sudan. It made the Queen quite ill ; for she was darkly certain that " Mr. Gladstone and the Government *have*—the Queen *feels it dreadfully*—Gordon's innocent, noble heroic blood on their consciences." Their correspondence was resumed, this time in cipher ; and Mr. Gladstone noted the change with solemn courtesy. After the shock the Government's first impulse was to give Wolseley his way and let him " smash the Mahdi." The Queen was strong for further operations ; and her Imperial sense was gratified by offers of military aid from Canada and Australia. But even when it was prepared for action, the Government seemed to depress her—" It is this hopeless way of going on which would make me hail a change of Government. Otherwise if they *will* but be *firm, honest*, and *not* so miserably undecided and non-supporting or believing those they employ—I don't care if they remain in. But I have *no* confidence left. . . ." In any case, they must be pressed to give Lord Wolseley a freer hand in the Sudan ; and she indulged in most unusual confidences to the General's wife, informing Lady Wolseley privately that her ministers were " *more incorrigible* than ever " and that their military subordinate would be well advised to " hold *strong* language to them, and *even* THREATEN to resign if he does *not* receive strong support and liberty of action. . . . I really think they *must be frightened*."

Salvation appeared upon the troubled scene from a most unexpected quarter. That spring the Russians made a menacing move on the Afghan frontier ; and in the shadow

of a graver war Gladstone was firm. The Queen was highly pleased, expressing "satisfaction . . . at this firm & proper tone held by the Govt. to the Russian Ambassador,—w<sup>h</sup> she cannot help hoping may have some effect—as she thinks the Russians expected the Govt. w<sup>ld</sup> swallow everything ;—especially as—whether wrongly or rightly it is believed that Mr. Gladstone's views lean towards Russia." The House of Commons heard him move a vote for warlike preparations, and the deep voice announced that "we only know that the attack was a Russian attack. We know that the Afghans suffered in life, in spirit, and in repute. We know that a blow was struck at the credit and the authority of a sovereign—our protected ally—who had committed no offence. All I say is, we cannot in that state of things close this book and say, 'We will look into it no more.'" Here was another Mr. Gladstone, whom the Queen at her most bellicose could almost applaud. The Russian Government was warned in time ; a settlement was reached ; and as the dust settled, it was found that orders for a forward policy in the Sudan had been withdrawn. For it would plainly have been unreasonable to engulf a British army in the depths of Africa with an immediate prospect of war in Europe and Asia. The Queen acquiesced regretfully ; and that book, at least, was closed.

Another opened, as the Cabinet essayed the formulation of a policy for Ireland. Mr. Gladstone's colleagues were not all of the same mind ; and the Queen enquired eagerly for news of their various opinions. The Prime Minister's reply verged on the encyclopædic, as he unfolded the rich complications of the Irish Question and the various shades of opinion represented in his Cabinet ; it would fall, he thought, to be decided in a distant future when Lord Hartington sat in his place as a minister of the Prince of Wales. But one summer night, before these deliberations could take effect, the Irish members voted with the Opposition against the Budget ; the Government was defeated ; and Lord Randolph Churchill leapt on a bench to wave his

handkerchief and lead the Tory view-halloo. There was an interval of telegraphing between Downing Street and Balmoral; ministers resigned; the Queen was half inclined to bring Mr. Gladstone up to Scotland (a summons parried by his plea of business and the further complication of "proceeding to evacuate rapidly this house after five years without having any other ready to receive me"); her own departure for the South could hardly be accelerated, as the railway authorities considered it unsafe for her to leave without several days' notice, and she was feeling far from well—"the Queen is a Lady—nearer 70 than 60"; besides, she never liked to be at Windsor during Ascot week. But Lord Salisbury was finally installed in office, although there was some difficulty about the terms for the conduct of Parliamentary business which he wished to impose upon the Liberals.

So Mr. Gladstone's reign was over; and the Queen bowed ~~him~~ out in style, offering an Earldom "as a *mark* of her *recognition* of his long, & distinguished Services as she believes & *thinks* he will thereby be enabled still to render great service to his Sovereign & Country." She even pressed him to postpone his retirement from public life and to be careful of his health. This was really going very far; and she was quite conscious of her own generosity, since her diary recorded that she had written "in very civil terms." He was profoundly touched, informing Granville that the Queen's letter "moves and almost upsets me. It must have cost her much to write, and it is really a pearl of great price." In his reply he bowed his very deepest:

"It would not be easy for him to describe the feelings with which he has read Your Majesty's generous, most generous letter.

"He prizes every word of it, for he is fully alive to all the circumstances which give it value.

"It will be a precious possession to him, and to his children after him. All, that could recommend an Earldom to him, it already has given him . . ."

But he would not take the Earldom. His gratitude was genuine enough ; and it was heightened by his knowledge of the distaste which she had overcome before making such an offer in such terms. The final audience was uneventful ; he noted half an hour of " kindly conversation," while she found him " very much excited, but . . . very amiable " ; and at midsummer, 1885, they parted.



## VII

### ANTIPATHY

THE tragedy of Queen Victoria's relations with Mr. Gladstone was a tragedy of growth. Time and growth altered both of them. For with the passage of the years Mr. Gladstone underwent considerable changes ; and it was no less evident that time (and Disraeli) changed the Queen. Such changes are inevitable, and they might both have aged together without uncomfortable consequences. But unhappily the processes of growth took them in opposite directions, and they grew away from one another. As the years went by, Gladstone moved steadily towards the Left in politics, while by a sad mischance his sovereign inclined towards the Right. Worse still, Gladstone did not stop growing. For while the Queen retained for life the fixed impression of Disraeli's teaching, Mr. Gladstone continued to grow visibly more Radical. This obstinate development widened the gulf between them ; and it resulted that the Queen, with her mind firmly set in the safe principles of Disraelian Conservatism, surveyed his popular vagaries with deepening and elderly disapproval. True, she was ten years his junior ; but Mr. Gladstone was still growing. He could still change his mind ; and it was the paradox of his long career that, as the years passed, he steadily grew younger than his juniors. He was already younger than the Queen, enthroned for life among the past glories of 1878 ; he was far younger than the antique Whiggishness of Hartington ; his search for a democratic settlement in Ireland would soon leave Chamberlain behind, shocked into middle-aged resistance ; and as his mind reached forward towards international peace, he would stand out in the last phase of all younger, far younger than the gilded youth of Rosebery himself. That was the

tragedy of the Liberal Epigoni. It was proclaimed in 1885 that Chamberlain, the paladin of Social Reform, was the man of the next generation ; but was not Gladstone, who resigned upon Disarmament in 1894, the man of the next generation but one—and less acceptable than ever to the Queen ?

## I

There was a mild exchange of courtesies whilst he remained in Opposition. His throat was giving trouble ; and when he asked permission to decline an invitation to Osborne on the ground that he had been forbidden to talk and would appear, as he put it picturesquely, “ as a statue among living people,” the simile amused the Queen ; for what could be less like a statue than her late Prime Minister ? But she still did her best for his political education, urging him to disavow extreme opinions and affirm “ that *liberalism* is *not Socialism* & that *progress* does *not* mean *Revolution*.” Revolution, in this instance, meant Mr. Chamberlain ; and in his answer Mr. Gladstone reassured her with the intelligence that Mr. Chamberlain had been to stay with him at Hawarden and that Liberals were likely to be kept busy for some time to come with moderate reforms, although the distant future seemed less certain.

But his mind was busy with a more immediate problem. For Lord Salisbury, in spite of subterranean activities, made little progress with the Irish problem beyond exciting hopes that induced Irish electors to vote Conservative in the General Election of 1885. The result of these manoeuvres was a Parliament in which Conservatives were outnumbered by Liberals, but the Irish members held the balance ; and as the year went out, Mr. Gladstone was at Hawarden, deep in the congenial task of thinking out the Irish Question. His duty, as he informed a correspondent, was “ to think, and think, and think ” ; and the Queen waited with profound misgivings for the result of his reflections. The Conservatives were plainly beaten ; but she was not pre-

pared to face another Liberal Government—" Things must and can not return to what they were, for it would be **UTTER** ruin to the country and Europe"—so there must be a coalition of Whigs and Tories to keep out the Radicals. And how was she to deal with Mr. Gladstone? Lord Salisbury sent her consoling messages to the effect that Gladstone would be far less formidable without his old majority, and that she would be able to object to the appointment of undesirable ministers, and that a threat to dissolve Parliament would always bring him to heel. But these consolations were unavailing. The royal heart was set upon a coalition to keep Mr. Gladstone out of office; and Ponsonby was sent to sound Mr. Goschen on the possibility of Whig defections from the Liberals. The Queen was frank, writing to Goschen with a strong appeal "to all moderate, loyal, and *really patriotic* men, who have the safety and well-being of the Empire and the Throne at heart," to save them from "the reckless hands of Mr. Gladstone . . . who can persuade himself that *everything* he takes up is right, even though it be calling black, white, and wrong, right." This remarkable communication was sent to Mrs. Goschen for the benefit of her cautious husband by the safe hands of a Court lady, who wrote at the same time begging another Liberal to resist "the wild plans of Mr. G." and not to "join in trying to drive out the present Government to let Mr. G. come in again." The royal anxiety grew more outspoken than ever at the intelligence that "Mr. Gladstone (in his 77<sup>th</sup> year) is *bent* on forcing himself into office. Such a wanton act should meet with no support . . ."

A gracious note to Mrs. Gladstone in the first week of 1886 hoped against hope that he would take a rest, "which he so *often* spoke of as his *great* wish and which is essential at his time of life." Meanwhile the anxious sovereign did her best to whip up the Whigs—"Why can you, moderate, loyal and patriotic Whigs, not join and declare you will not follow Mr. Gladstone, and not support him? He will ruin the country if he can." But even with this august supporter

Lord Salisbury could hardly stay in office without a Parliamentary majority. The Government resigned ; the Whigs had failed her ; and the Queen was left once more with the unpleasant prospect of Mr. Gladstone. Her first message to him intimated broadly that, if he preferred to retire from public life, the Queen would not stand in his way. But while Mr. Gladstone was "very grateful for Your Majesty's gracious consideration for his declining years," he felt constrained by the Irish situation to accept office once again, although, as his diary recorded, "for a brief tenure only." As to his colleagues, Dilke's tragedy removed one royal difficulty ; and he submitted sadly to her ban on Granville as Foreign Secretary. A royal note recorded mournfully that "Mr. Gladstone had 'accepted' (alas !)" ; and he was Prime Minister once more in January, 1886.

## 2

The veteran set briskly about forming his third Government. He came to Osborne, and the Queen found him looking "very pale" and "less Radical himself than he used to be, and as intensely in earnest, almost fanatically so, in his belief that he is almost sacrificing himself for Ireland." There was a good deal of talk upon the Irish Question ; and afterwards she reported it "in strict confidence" to Lord Salisbury. There were few difficulties about the composition of his new Cabinet, since the Prime Minister "wished to please your Majesty to the best of his power" and seemed unusually obliging, while the Queen did her best not to impede "his *very difficult* task." With an early prospect of graver disagreements this calm was slightly ominous ; and she began to press for details of his Irish projects. Meanwhile, he made a most disturbing speech about the House of Lords, which his sovereign read "with *deep & unfeigned regret*." This reproof was gravely answered with a full statement of the case and a sardonic offer, "if Your Majesty shall be pleased to point out anything favourable to the House of Lords which he could usefully have said," to say it.

The royal answer indicated the neglected virtues of the Upper House; and the Prime Minister replied without enthusiasm that "Your Majesty's argument might doubtless have been used with great force from the Opposition Bench"; nor was his temper improved by the subsequent discovery that, when the Queen made her first complaint, she had not read the full text of his speech.

The outline of his Irish policy was finally disclosed; it moved Mr. Chamberlain to resignation; and the Queen commented bleakly on "a measure which does not appear to command the approval of the Majority of her subjects in the United Kingdom." An audience that month impressed him as "an indication of a coming storm"; and his personal relations with the sovereign were shadowed by their political divergence. For when he pleaded that pressure of work prevented him from obeying a command to dine and sleep at Windsor, the Prime Minister was coldly informed that "Her Majesty is very sorry because Wednesday is the only day on which Her Majesty could receive you at present." Mrs. Gladstone intervened with a touching "appeal to your Majesty's kindness. My husband's throat, I grieve to say, requires so much rest, that I had arranged to take him a few miles from London where he would have perfect quiet. The extraordinary effort upon the 8th being so great, Sir Andrew Clark has enforced the utmost quiet and watching on my part, with all the special care a wife can give to contrive absence of talking and the rest." The Queen melted; and a statesman of seventy-six was graciously permitted to reserve his strength from Windsor Castle and the rigours of an English spring in order to be equal to the introduction of a Home Rule Bill.

The great day came; and in the words of his Chief Secretary, "few are the heroic moments in our parliamentary politics, but this was one." The crowds thronged Palace Yard; the Prime Minister spoke incomparably for three hours and a half, in which the forty sections of his Bill were lucidly expounded. The Queen, however, reserved

her praises for his critics ; for she was busy pressing Hartington to prefer patriotism to party—or, at least, to the Liberal Party. But the Whigs lacked her fire ; and she was soon writing to Goschen that “ it is [a] sad, and I cannot help saying *not* creditable or pleasant fact that the Liberals do *not* wish to *unite* with the Conservatives at such a *supreme* moment of danger to the best interests of my great Empire. However, we must *not* mind this narrow party view (which is, moreover, NOT shared by the Conservatives !), and organise the opposition to these dangerous Bills separately, and then act together.” The Queen warned Gladstone frankly that she could not give him the full support that she would have wished (with a generous admission that the Prime Minister believed himself to be acting for the best) ; and he acknowledged her “ desire to give an unvarying constitutional support to those who may have the honour to be Your Majesty’s advisers,” though this possibly did not include the conduct of a lively correspondence with the Opposition. As the Bill went forward, they argued strenuously with some loss of mutual esteem. The Queen, perhaps, had not much to lose ; but Mr. Gladstone’s private note on one royal missive—“ I shall take no notice of this rather foolish letter ”—marks the sad decline in his respect. It might have suffered even more, had he known that the sovereign was in active consultation with the Leader of the Opposition as to “ whether, if Mr. Gladstone, on the defeat of his Bill, wishes to dissolve, it is desirable that he should be permitted to do so ; or whether it is better that Lord Hartington should be sent for.” Lord Salisbury weighed up the chances and advised the Queen to act on her Prime Minister’s advice, if he advised a General Election, adding the comforting opinion that “ the Unionists will gain on a dissolution.” Accordingly her Private Secretary was authorised to inform Mr. Gladstone that he might have a dissolution if he wanted one.

The Bill was lost in the House of Commons ; Parliament dissolved ; there was a General Election ; and the Home

Rulers were defeated. During the elections there were a few exchanges on the current controversy between the Queen and Mr. Gladstone. Both correspondents remained unconvinced ; but further discussion was superfluous, as the Government resigned. She favoured him with advice upon his future conduct, suggesting that it would be as well if he abstained from public speeches which might encourage violence ; and once again they parted, his Journal noting that " to me personally it is a great relief, including in this sensation my painful relations with the Queen, who will have a like feeling."

## 3

After 1886 the Queen's opinion of Mr. Gladstone was beyond repair. In 1880 she had merely distrusted him as the successful critic of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy ; the intervening years swelled her misgivings with a deep suspicion of his growing Radicalism ; but now he was the open champion of Home Rule for Ireland, of a policy aimed (as it seemed to its opponents) at the integrity of the Empire—her Empire.

With such opinions there could be no compromise ; and the Queen gave full rein to her feelings, writing to Lord Lansdowne in Canada that " it is dreadful to see a man who was three times Prime Minister fall so low ! " That was in 1887. A week or so before she had received the veteran's dutiful congratulations upon her Jubilee. In the next year he seriously considered refusing an invitation to Windsor ; but the ever-tactful Granville pressed him to avoid needless trouble. Even formalities presented difficulties now, the Queen withholding leave for a small Cabinet disclosure until it was too late to be of any use to him. But he could still defend the Civil List with his accustomed soundness ; the Queen could still find means to be gracious to him at Marlborough House ; and in 1889 his Golden Wedding was honoured with a royal message, although his loyal invitation to Hawarden was declined, the royal time being

fully occupied with a visit to Sir Theodore Martin at Llangollen.

The years went by. Under a Conservative Government the Irish Question unfolded its unpleasing length; *The Times* assisted patriotic feeling by the publication of seditious forgeries attributed to Mr. Parnell, who received a grudging and belated vindication; a furtive taste for romance sent him the mournful way of Dilke, and the Irish Party dissolved in savage faction-fighting. But the grim problem still persisted; and in its shadow, as Lord Salisbury presided imperturbably over a succession of Chief Secretaries, the "Grand Old Man" grew older and, if anything, a trifle grander than before. But even Conservative Governments cannot last for ever; there would have to be a General Election before the end of 1892; and when it came, the Queen's diary recorded her sincere opinion that "should these wretched Home Rulers come in, it is to be hoped they will not last long." At first, indeed, she hoped it might be possible to avoid another spell of Mr. Gladstone—"the G.O.M. at eighty-two is a very *alarming look-out*"—but she was finally persuaded that it would be hopeless for her to send for Lord Rosebery or Sir William Harcourt or any of his other followers over his head. Lord Salisbury vilified him to the Queen in the best Disraelian tradition, and she responded to the treatment, noting that "Mr. Gladstone has brought so much personal violence into the contest, and used such insolent language that the Queen is quite shocked and ashamed." But he fought on indomitably, "waging a daily and hourly battle against Nature with no sort of personal assurance as to my capacity to sustain it," and the old hero won.

The mounting tide of Liberals horrified the Queen, and she poured out her feelings to Lord Lansdowne:

"By an incomprehensible, reckless vote, the result of most unfair and abominable misrepresentations at the elections, one of the best and most useful Governments have been defeated. . . . The Queen-Empress can hardly trust herself to



say what she feels and thinks on the subject. Apart from the pain of parting from some great personal friends and people whom she can trust and rely on, the danger to the country, to Europe, to her vast Empire, which is involved in having all these great interests entrusted to the shaking hand of an old, wild, and incomprehensible man of 82½, is very great! It is a terrible trial, but, thank God, the country is sound, and it cannot last."

This was, to say the least, unpromising.

But she resigned herself to send for Mr. Gladstone, a pointed note informing him that she had accepted Lord Salisbury's resignation "with much regret" and that she trusted "Mr. Gladstone and his friends will continue to maintain & promote the honour and welfare of her great Empire." He replied with some restraint that such would be their endeavour, "although he is of course sensible of the fallibility of his and their judgments, and can claim for them no other authority than that of sincere and tried convictions." The Queen was frankly hostile, writing to the Prince of Wales about "this iniquitous Government." The new Prime Minister impressed her at his first audience as greatly aged, "his face shrunk, deadly pale with a weird look in the eyes, a feeble expression about the mouth, and the voice altered . . . It is rather trying and anxious work to have to take as Prime Minister a man of eighty-two and a half, who really seems no longer quite fitted to be at the head of a Government, and whose views and principles are somewhat dangerous." His own impression of the interview was less cruel, but not more promising, since he found the Queen "cautiously polite, in nothing helpful. Not however captious, perfect in temper, not one sympathetic word or any question however detached. After dinner a little unfrozen." The veteran retained, it seemed, his faculty of observation.

But no proof of his unflagging powers, no exhibition of tact could overcome her prejudice. The Prince and Princess of Wales were invariably gracious to him; but the Queen

remained quite unapproachable behind the battlements of her unchanging disapproval. His exclusion of the scurrilous Labouchere gave satisfaction ; her courtesy enquired after his health, when he was charged and trampled by a cow at Hawarden (and was wholly unimpaired by the unpleasant adventure) ; her interest was politely roused by his memories of Tennyson, when the Laureate died and Mr. Gladstone sent some of Arthur Hallam's letters for the Queen to read ; she even marvelled at his energy, when he went off to Oxford and gave a lecture. But she found his views as uncongenial as ever. They still differed vigorously over Ireland ; and when they met, the conversation turned upon trivialities. After one audience that year the Prime Minister made a melancholy note of the topics :—

- " 1. Inquiry for the Queen's health.
2. The fogs of London & Windsor.
3. The Laureateship. W. Watson.
4. The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland . . .
5. The Roumanian Marriage . . .
6. Lord Acton : not yet personally known to the Queen.
7. Condition of Lady Kimberley.
8. Has Mrs. Gladstone still a nephew who is a master at Eton ?
9. Dean Wellesley . . .
10. The Dean of Peterborough.
11. Health of the Bp. of Rochester.
12. Agricultural distress (H.M. seemed half inclined to lay it upon ' large importations ').
13. Commission thereupon (not desired).

" These are all or nearly all the topics of conversation introduced at the audience to-night. From them may be gathered in some degree the terms of confidence between H.M. and her Prime Minister. Not perhaps with perfect exactitude, as she instinctively avoids points of possible difference. But then it seems that such are now all points."

Small wonder that his record of an audience in the next year was : " A form as usual, indeed I fear a sham."

There was to be another Home Rule Bill in 1893 ; and the Queen, true to her principles, stoutly refused to let it be described as a measure "for the better government of Ireland." The indomitable old man introduced it "in a lengthened speech to a very considerable House" ; and the royal diary noted some failure in his voice towards the end of the second hour, though "Bertie was present, and telegraphed that the speech was impressive." But she liked the Unionist speeches best and made no effort to conceal her views from the Prime Minister, who expressed "his thankfulness to Your Majesty for the very frank expression of Your Majesty's apprehensions as to the tendencies of the Irish Government Bill." Tory ladies sent her accounts of Ulster demonstrations ; Unionist gentlemen were ready with their guidance, when she seemed dangerously inclined to insist upon a dissolution, if the House of Lords threw out the Bill. But she was still afflicted with uncongenial ministers ; and she did her best to show them where their duty lay. There was the question of naval armaments ; and the Queen insisted upon ample preparation for the inevitable war with France and Russia. It was quite unpardonable of Mr. Gladstone not to accept the Opposition's sound opinions ; and she would have been more deeply shocked if she had known that he was even less favourable to unnecessary armaments than any of his colleagues. He could still do his duty, though, upon the question of a royal allowance ; but he was most disobliging about an honour for Lord Lansdowne on his return from India ; and when he went off to Biarritz in January, 1894, the Queen still felt herself oppressed by her indefatigable Prime Minister of eighty-four.

That winter, though, the burden began to weigh him down. He had come almost unscathed through sixteen months of highly controversial Cabinets, some of which were aptly diagnosed by somebody as "heated and very Harcourty" and occasionally sent the more fragile Morley reeling into the ante-room with a gasp of "Very rough, very rough." His Parliamentary performances on the Home

Rule Bill had been a miracle of sustained dexterity and eloquence ; night after night the old swordsman was in his place, full of debating ingenuity, broad reasoning, and even banter. But disagreement with his colleagues upon the naval estimates began to wear him down. He felt his weaknesses,—the growing dimness of his eyes and the increasing faintness of the sounds about him—more than he used to ; and he dismissed 1893 with the apostrophe : “ Farewell old year. Will there be another ? ”

He returned from France in February to find his colleagues more set on naval armaments than ever, and, worse still, “ that my sight has gone one stage backward.” That fatal combination decided him to take the final plunge, and he went off to Windsor for a talk with Ponsonby. His first consideration was the Queen’s convenience : should he resign at once ? All things considered, it was felt to be most suitable that he should see her for the purpose. His intention to resign was put in writing, and one February day he came to Windsor for an audience. They talked about the weather and her plans for an Italian holiday. “ She was at the highest point of cheerfulness. Her manner was personally kind throughout. She asked about my wife, and about the Rector . . . To me she said she was sorry *for the cause* which brought about my resignation.” The official wheels went round, and Mr. Gladstone sat in Cabinet for the last time. It moved him, though his face was set like marble ; it moved the others too ; and his voice scarcely rose above a whisper for the last “ God bless you all.” But his farewell at Windsor was less emotional. At first he thought the Queen was going to break down ; but that might only have been his failing eyesight. At any rate, she retained full control of her emotions ; and the conversation was as insignificant as ever—the merits of rival oculists, royal thanks for his services about the Duke of Coburg’s grant, a gracious word on Mrs. Gladstone, and not a single syllable about the past, about the close of a fourth Premiership and of sixty years in English public life.

That was the end. A brief note wished him continued "peace & quiet with his excellent & devoted wife in health & happiness" and an improvement of his sight. But, as he noted sadly later, "it was the kind and generous farewell from Ponsonby which had to fill for me the place of a farewell from my Sovereign." Her mood, indeed, was livelier, since she gaily informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that "Mr. Gladstone has gone out, disappeared all in a moment. His last two ministries have been failures. Indeed," she added 'with a most amusing little laugh,' "his last three. Mr. Gladstone takes up one or two things—and then nothing else interests him. He cares nothing for foreign affairs, which are always essential to England. Knows nothing of foreign affairs—exceedingly distrusted on the Continent. They have thought he might abandon Egypt any moment. He will not attend to any suggestions but his own mind's. He does not care what you say, does not even attend. I have told him two or three *facts* of which he was quite ignorant, on foreign tone and temper. It makes no difference. He only says 'Is that so? Really?'" For an impenetrable curtain had dropped between them.

His own diagnosis was more rueful :

"The force of a resemblance really compels me to put a word on paper, which I had not intended, which will stand alone, and will never pass the door of my lips on its passage to the ear of any human being.

"In the autumn of 1838 I made the *gita* of Sicily from Palermo by Girgenti and Syracuse or Messina in two or three weeks, riding on the back of a mule. The beast was wholly inaccessible to notes of kindness by voice or hand, and was disposed to lag so that our muleteer, Michele, used to call out 'Pugna, Signor, Pugna!'—an unwelcome process of only momentary effect. But we rode usually with little interval from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., and its undemonstrative unsympathetic service was not inefficiently performed. In due time we arrived at Messina to take our departure from the Island. There my mule and I of necessity parted company.

" But I well remember having at the time a mental experience which was not wholly unlike a turn of indigestion. I had been on the back of the beast for many scores of hours, it had done me no wrong ; it had rendered me much valuable service, but it was in vain to argue ; there was the fact staring me in the face. I could not get up the smallest shred of feeling for the brute, I could neither love nor like it.

" A rule of three sum is all that is necessary to conclude with. What that Sicilian mule was to me, I have been to the Queen ; and the fortnight or three weeks are represented by 52 or 53 years."

That was his mournful apologue. It grieved him "to be troublesome to any one, especially among women to a Queen, and to an old and much respected Queen. I am very sorry for it ; and I should be much more sorry still, but I cannot suspect that I had either by wilfulness or by neglect caused aggravations of the mischief." Yet one circumstance in her farewell compelled his gratitude. He confessed that "taking relations to me since 1844, as a whole, there is in them something of mystery, which I have not been able to fathom, and probably never shall. I hope my duty to H.M. and her family has never in fact, as it has never in intention, fallen short. And I have a new cause of gratitude to H.M., in her having on this last occasion admitted my wife anew to a footing of confidence and freedom. She had too long, I think, been suffering on my behalf. I am glad that this chapter is well closed. God Save the Queen."

## 4

The epilogue was meagre. Before the year was out the Queen, relying on his invariable loyalty, asked him to support a royal grant in Parliament. But the old crusader's outbreak on the subject of Armenian atrocities elicited an angry comment in the old manner on "the impolitic half-mad attitude of Mr. Gladstone." Her condolences were ready when Archbishop Benson died suddenly in Hawarden

Church one day in 1896. She received him after some manœuvring in the next year at Cannes. Each found the other changed, and he recorded that the royal manner was "decidedly kind, such as I had not seen it for a good while before my final resignation ; and she gave me her hand . . . which had never happened with me during all my life." The talk was trivial, and after ten minutes they parted. It gratified him that she had shown kindness at their final meeting ; for they never met again. That year she had her Diamond Jubilee ; and a Court functionary sent medals by command to Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone. When he was taken ill in 1898, she was most careful to enquire ; and when the long career was closed, her epitaph was almost gentle : "He was very clever and full of ideas for the bettering and advancement of the country, always most loyal to me personally, and ready to do anything for the Royal Family ; but alas ! I am sure involuntarily, he did at times a good deal of harm. He had a wonderful power of speaking and carrying the masses with him."

The Queen lived on for three years more ; and then the reign was over—her reign and, perhaps, his reign as well. For who can say which of its nobler features were Victorian and which Gladstonian ?

*THE PRIMROSE PATH*



## MR. DISRAELI, STATESMAN

WITH the education of contemporary taste, the resemblance of Lord Beaconsfield to Mr. Mantalini is becoming noticeable, even to members of the Primrose League. The Suez Canal shares show a comfortable profit of nine hundred per cent. ; the Treaty of Berlin has not yet been seen through by more than half the population of the Balkan Peninsula ; and a living dramatist has approached the theme, if not with the Nelson, at least with the Parker touch. But there is a regrettable and increasing tendency on the part of posterity to be irreverent about a statesman who appears to have borrowed his *haute politique* from Mr. William Le Queux, and his *haute finance* from the *New Witness*. One feels, in the cold light of this sweeter, simpler reign, that there is a faintly disreputable air of Early Victorian raffishness about that singular career. There is something the matter with his period. One may respect almost any *Zeitgeist*, if only it will not wear ridiculous clothes. But when it comes with its head wreathed in wax flowers and its hands full of scraps of *papier-mâché*, casting mother-of-pearl before swine, enthusiasms are apt to grow a trifle faint ; and even collectors of *bric-à-brac* turn sadly in other directions. Which is the worst of the Great Victorians.

The broad outline of Disraeli's career is respectable, and even distinguished ; but its detail is appalling. That is why the call of the multiple watch-chain is growing fainter, and the visual appeal of bottle-green trousering is beginning to fail across the grey distances of the North Temperate Zone. The fatal elegance of that *coiffure* has shocked a generation which prefers its heroes bald ; and it is not easy to respect a statesman who habitually thought of the upper

classes like an upper servant. In his *Life* one is perpetually overhearing asides which sound less like the confessions of an ex-Minister than the comments of a retired, if slightly cynical, butler. But for all that, it was a great career informed by a magnificent, if inaccurate, imagination. For Disraeli, whether in his novels or his politics, Dukes were perpetually coming down to breakfast in full Garter robes, whilst the ancestral standard was run up on the Norman keep and a brass band crashed out the National Anthem in the dining-room. It may be, as his biographer ruefully remarks of his gusto at the wedding of Queen Alexandra, that "the trappings of royal and noble life appealed to his sense of fitness." But at least they are more inspiring than the bleak broad-cloth of Mrs. Humphry Ward; and as Disraeli conceived his career as a show, it is gratifying that the Beaconsfield Trustees found him a biographer who would not give the show away.

Disraeli's reputation, as the American said of the British Empire, is "a queer, queer thing." It is not easy to recover the first rapture with which the Victorians received the miracle of a politician who could both write and speak, or to disinter from maiden hearts the ineffable romance of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who wrote fiction. To the modern eye those ringlets are almost lack-lustre; and the figure that fascinated Queen Victoria, as it posed in Oriental attitudes against the tartan wall-paper of Osborne, has lost something of its power. The emerald trousers and the canary-coloured waistcoat, which drew the early Forties as with a magnet, fail somehow in their grip upon an age which dresses badly, but with some method in its badness; and there is little romance in the feeling for aristocracy which Disraeli shared with Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Michael Arlen. The East is full of mysteries, even after *Kismet* and Mr. Robert Hichens. But it is least mysterious when its waistcoat is full of watchchains: *ex oriente nux* is a familiar and an unattractive emblem. Yet it is possible in the cold dawn of the present century to forget Disraeli's fantastic parades across proud



Lord Rothschild and the King, commits no single error of taste or discretion: it is, in a biographer, a great omission.

Disraeli soon emerged from the exotic chrysalis with which he had scandalised Victorian society, and settled soberly into English politics. So early as the year 1852 he was painted by the President of the Royal Academy in a complete black outfit; he was even wearing a black tie. His judicious marriage placed him beyond the need of money, and he moved easily up and down the pages of Debrett: in the year 1846 he sat at table with four Lords and a Duke.

It was in the days after the repeal of the Corn Laws, when Disraeli had tomahawked Peel out of office, that he began to loom large in the political world of loaves and fish-dinners at Greenwich and to acquire a serious position in the Tory Party. The leadership of the Protectionists was in that state of eclipse which has since become its tradition. Lord George Bentinck was an extremely worthy man; but when his biographer observes that Disraeli "was much tried by the behaviour of his leader, who discredited himself by a number of petty personal charges of jobs and blunders against Peel's late Government," and adds that "the charges were all satisfactorily repelled," one marvels at the continuity of the Tory tradition. In the following year, Disraeli moved forward to the Front Bench and transferred his membership from Shrewsbury to High Wycombe; it was the beginning of his advance. When the question of the leadership was raised on Bentinck's death, the Country party was faced with the unfortunate necessity of choosing a spokesman who was un-English, but intelligent. Disraeli had made a militant demonstration of his Hebraism in the publication of *Tancred*. Like many Jews who have forsaken their religion, he was doubly emphatic as to his race; and his description of the Church as "a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles" must have petrified the bishops,

as surely as it would convert Mr. Belloc into a stream of molten lava. In the result, he cut his party clear of Protection and led them back into office, in spite of the fact that Prince Albert felt "very uneasy" as to the laxity of his political conscience.

He approached the year 1848 with a veneration for "the serene intelligence of the profound Metternich" and a regard for Louis Philippe that was almost filial; and it is hardly surprising that a year that left "the King of France in a Surrey villa, Metternich in a Hanover Square Hotel, and the Prince of Prussia at Lady Palmerston's" found him slightly shocked. Disraeli informed the House of Commons that Louis Philippe had succeeded "in riding for a period of seventeen years the Jacobin tiger," and omitted to notice that on his return from the excursion the aged monarch had exactly followed the precedent set by the young lady of Riga. But Disraeli rarely joked about Royalty, from these early days until he made his astonished Queen into an Oriental potentate, and left the stage in a blaze of shooting Stars and revolving Garters.

Disraeli was generally in Opposition in the company of a number of frivolous old gentlemen known as the Tory Party. Opposition came as natural to Disraeli as Reform Bills to Lord John Russell; and he is, perhaps, the only man since Charles Fox whose intellect has survived a protracted residence on the left of the Speaker without deteriorating into what we have learnt euphemistically to describe as "ginger." His Oppositions opposed; but they were rarely ridiculous and sometimes constructive. In the year 1855 his country was at war with Russia for some reason of which the secret was admirably kept by the Foreign Office; and the people of England called, in accordance with their practice on these occasions, for a Man. This flattering appellation was first fixed upon Lord Derby; but the fourteenth Earl was disinclined to anticipate his descendant in this virile character, and took no steps, apart from a speech which Lord Henry Lennox described (with an uncanny prevision of Mr. Shaw)

as "the old roar of the British Lion." The demand for a dictator was finally satisfied by an elderly Irish peer with a remarkable instinct for the requirements of the average man; and Lord Palmerston went into office on the shoulders of "majorities collected God knows how, voting God knows why." Disraeli, with a clever man's utter failure to understand unreason, was extremely angry; he pursued his country's choice with such invective as "an old painted pantaloon," and "a sort of Parliamentary grandpapa," and even attacked his principles as the manoeuvres of a "gay old Tory of the older school disguising himself as a Liberal." But he had the intelligence to observe that "a war Opposition and a war Ministry could not co-exist"; it is a discovery which Mr. Pringle was one day to share with Mr. Pemberton-Billing.

Meanwhile the Crimean War, which was siege warfare in truth and in fact, went placidly on by the waters of the Black Sea. Italy came in, in her odd way; and Disraeli startled an old lady by imparting to her the alarming figures of national expenditure:

"The war expenditure of France is one million and a half sterling per week—that of England one million and a quarter! This is a large sum for distant objects and somewhat equivocal success."

If the old lady would call round again, we could show her the same article in a more expensive style. The queer littleness of the Crimea is well illustrated by another letter, in which Disraeli almost shrieks that

"Lady Londonderry is in despair about her son, Lord Adolphus Vane, who is now in the trenches. The trenches are so near the enemy that we lose forty *per diem* by casualties. *Casualties*, she says, and truly, what a horrible word to describe the loss of limb and life!"

"*They order, said I, this matter better in France.*"

But the war brought its compensations for an aspiring member of the Opposition :

" We had the honour of a royal invitation to some of the festivities, and, when I was presented, Napoleon came forward, and shook hands with me cordially, and spoke some gracious words. Our Queen was on his right, the Empress next to her—Prince Albert on the left of the Emperor, then Duchess of Kent and Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Mary. So one had to make seven reverences."

It really makes one quite giddy, and sounds rather like paying one's respects to a steel engraving.

Two years later, when polite society was intrigued by the appearance of a comet and the usual announcement of the approaching end of the age, the native troops went out at Meerut, and the Victorians were confronted by the inelegant circumstance of the Indian Mutiny. British opinion was unable to grasp the military problem of its suppression ; but the atrocities enjoyed a tremendous vogue. Disraeli, who was constitutionally sceptical in such matters, was unable to share the gusto with which his countrymen peered down the Well of Cawnpore :

" The details of all these stories are suspicious. Details are a feature of the Myth. The accounts are too graphic—I hate the word. Who can have seen these things? Who heard them? The rows of ladies standing with their babies in their arms to be massacred, with the elder children clutching to their robes—who that could tell these things could have escaped? "

This is not such stuff as Bryce Reports are made of. But it serves neatly to indicate the temper of kindly tolerance with which twenty years later Disraeli bore the depopulation of Bulgaria and drove the more sensitive imagination of Mr. Gladstone into the arms of the Little Father.

He developed in these years an astonishing project for the reform of the Civil Service. Failing completely to recognise

that the administrative salvation of England is to be sought in the exclusion from public employment of all persons resident in the Borough of Kensington, he contented himself with reconstituting the Departments. The scheme secured the maximum of confusion by combining the War, Marine, and Ordnance Departments in a single ministry ; the Post Office was merged in the Treasury ; and the Prime Minister became President of the Council, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Lord Privy Seal. There was also to be a Ministry of Poor Laws. Lord Stanley informed his father that "there is no great harm in making one man, the Minister of Poor Laws, a rather more important personage than he need be" ; it would have been a grateful prevision of Mr. and Mrs. Webb if he had made it a lady and a gentleman.

Meanwhile the Sixties continued in that atmosphere of commercial prosperity that is so profoundly irritating to Continental observers. Prince Albert died, and Disraeli compared him to Sir Philip Sidney. Count Bismarck emerged, and Disraeli compared him to Cardinal Alberoni. Lord Derby left him the Premiership, and Disraeli compared it to the top of a greasy pole. The invasion of Schleswig-Holstein filled him with ingenious arguments for non-intervention ; the manipulation of Luxemburg inspired him with a fear that France and Prussia would treat the Treaty of 1839 in the traditional manner :

"Our people might let it be known at Berlin and Paris that the violation of Belgian neutrality should not pass with impunity."

A movement of Irish-Americans (*autres temps, autres hyphens*) provoked a remarkable exposition of Imperial policy :

"Leave the Canadians to defend themselves ; recall the African squadron ; give up the settlements on the west coast of Africa ; and we shall make a saving which will, at the same time, enable us to build ships and have a good Budget."



It is a queer programme for the putative father of Imperialism. But there are some odd corners in the edifice of that singular career, which began in the *rococo* and ended in the Flamboyant Gothic. Disraeli's taste for colonies was always apt to break down when it came to colonials; and his principles amounted to little beyond an æsthetic desire to retain India for its decorative qualities. If it was a fault, it was perhaps a fault of the imagination. But perhaps it has as much value as the helter-skelter Imperialism of Mr. Hughes.

## II

### MR. DISRAELI, NOVELIST

#### I

WHEN a distressed posterity enquires why it must look to a man who wore bottle-green trousers and far, far too many watch-chains, for the richest picture of English society in that brilliant period which intervened between the divorce of Queen Caroline and the motherhood of Queen Victoria, the reply must be that, after all, it takes something of an outsider to be really romantic about English society. For it is only from the outside that any great institution, whether it is a Gothic cathedral, a Government Department, or a London club, can be really impressive. Nothing is sacred to the initiated. No valet, as it has been wisely said, is a hero to his master. Dukes hold no mysteries for duchesses; and baronets seem scarcely wicked to their wives.

That is why there has always been something a trifle exotic, if the language of the hot-house may be applied without ineptitude to Mrs. Humphry Ward, about the literary appreciators of the great world. It is by a similar irony that the nostalgia of Sussex, that chosen homeland of persons who do not belong there, appears to have affected most strongly among their contemporaries Mr. Kipling, who is Anglo-Indian, and Mr. Belloc, who is Anglo-Gallic. But one need not have week-ended with the Merlins in order to write a good account of Broceliaunde. Indeed, it would almost seem from the record of English social fiction as though it were only from outside the charmed circle that one can get a really good view of the incantations.

Disraeli, who delighted to see in the British country-house an Olympian resting-place of semi-divine personages between the exercises of the Palæstra and the subtleties of

the Senate (how one catches the flavour), was born in Theobald's Road. Du Maurier, who is for ever ushering us into a drawing-room that culminates in the tiara of a Duchess at the end of a long avenue of athletic bishops and majestic peeresses, was more than half a Frenchman and lived at the top of Heath Street. And Henry James, who saw unutterable depths of significance behind the stolid mask of British society, spent half a lifetime in the endeavour to forget that he was American-born. So scattered and so queer are the origins of those who have found in Mayfair their spiritual home.

But romance came natural to a young man who first put an author's pen to a publisher's paper in the year 1825. George IV, ignorant of the fatal but posthumous fascination which he was to exercise on Mr. Max Beerbohm, was king ; and Stephenson was fumbling laboriously towards a type of locomotive which should resemble a trifle less acutely that kettle which had been his earliest inspiration. But Napoleon was only four years dead, and Byron scarcely two ; and it was the authentic age of romance. If the moon shone then, you may be sure that it shone fitfully, through ragged clouds, and to an accompaniment of hooting owls upon a world populated almost exclusively by youthful knights and aged abbots. That was the right, the true romance. But the young Disraeli sought it elsewhere. Lytton looked for it always among the last of a species—Last of the Barons, Last of the Romans, Last Days of Pompeii. But Disraeli characteristically found it among the first—the first families in England and the highest in the land. He introduced to the astonished country of his adoption the high romance of the upper classes.

The discovery was announced in a publication which he subsequently stigmatised as " a kind of literary lusus " with that free play of Latinity which is habitual to those whose facility in the dead languages has not been arrested by a classical education ; and from the first page of *Vivian Grey* to the last page of *Endymion* he continued to work that



Dukes and sometimes Marquises ; and once or twice (for the English dearly love a Laud) they were high ecclesiastics. But the scene was always set with alabaster and plush curtains ; and the gas-jets were turned high to screaming point, as the flunkeys lined up along the walls and the house-party swept past on its way down to dinner—two Dukes, a Premier, and the Mingrelian Ambassador—and you marvelled, as they went by, to see how easily Mr. Disraeli mingled with this exalted company. That was the fare with which the heated social imagination of this young man provided his countrymen ; and it is at least more satisfying than the half-hearted snobbery of his later emulators. Mrs. Humphry Ward's Dukes take off their white kid gloves to begin dinner : Disraeli's draw them on.

But the social picture was not Disraeli's sole asset. There were his wit, his wisdom, his incredible verbal felicity besides. Fifty years before Wilde's young men were born, he was making all their dandy jokes in the intervals of leading the Opposition ; and when he sat down for a little recreation after the General Election of 1880, that old, defeated, weary man with the fallen cheeks and the dyed forelock sent up *Endymion* in three volumes of such fireworks as had not been seen since young Mr. D'Israeli first came upon the Town. But it is from his demerits that Disraeli derives his principal value as a Victorian antique. Just as the collector of curios *fin de siècle* now loves to surround himself with the wrong shapes, the bad colouring, the indefensible taste of the objects which disgraced his grandmother's drawing-room, so there is for the collector a wild splendour, a distorted magnificence, an unattractive beauty about Disraeli's social scene. For he is a genuine antique, and as such he has a value.

## 2

His first book was published in the same week as *Woodstock* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. It was the year 1826 in the

reign of George IV and the Premiership, apparently interminable, of Lord Liverpool. England was much what it had been since the days, not so remote, of the Great War. Bonaparte had died somewhere below the horizon. But Scott was still alive, the Duke of York everlastingly Commander-in-Chief; and Mr. Huskisson was the last word in progress, as Almack's (full in the reign of Madame Lieven) the last word in elegance.

It was the work of Benjamin, eldest son of Mr. Isaac D'Israeli, a learned amateur of somewhat miscellaneous accomplishments, who lived in Bloomsbury and distilled his learning into a succession of impressive and successful works. His son received a varied education, first in a dame's school at Islington, then in two private schools at Blackheath and Epping, and more continuously among the folios in his father's library. Destined, like half the human race, for the law, he spent an uneasy period on a solicitor's stool in Old Jewry. But the Muses beckoned. For ink, rather than sheepskin, was in the air of Bloomsbury Square. Before he was out of his articles, his father took him on occasion to Attic entertainments in Albemarle Street, where Tom Moore amused his publisher with news of Byron; and soon his draft conveyances were sadly defaced with notes on books and (graver still) with verse. He had already essayed fiction in a youthful and slightly dishevelled contribution to Leigh Hunt's *Indicator*; and at twenty he composed (what else could one compose at twenty?) a satire upon society. A publisher demurring, the author with unusual prescience requested him to burn his first-born. Then, at twenty-one, he sat down to a novel and got up from *Vivian Grey*.

Perhaps the motive was not wholly literary, since out of the £200 which it first brought him £150 was required for the laudable object of paying a debt of honour (if money owing by an author to a publisher can ever be so described). The speculative boom of 1825 ensnared him into extensive dealings in those New World securities which hopeful Mr.

Canning had just called into being to redress the balance of the Old. The effect on young Disraeli's balance was quite the contrary. But in the course of these operations he tasted the rich savour of high finance and became acquainted with an issuing-house, which he obliged with three timely compositions of a reassuring character. These brochures, entitled *An Enquiry into the Plans, Progress, and Policy of the American Mining Companies*, and *Lawyers and Legislators, or Notes on the American Mining Companies*, and *The Present State of Mexico* respectively, were not strictly fiction, although the writer's fancy played a trifle freely over the agreeable prospects of remunerative investment. But they led directly to his first effort as a novelist. For the boom broke; the publisher sent in a bill for printing the three pamphlets; and the dismayed young author found that he owed implacable Albemarle Street £150.

A graver loss oppressed him, since he had conceived a larger plan in the great days of soaring prices. His City friends were to finance, his publisher to publish a daily paper to confound *The Times* and encourage Mr. Canning. For a title they hit upon *The Representative* and for an editor on Lockhart. The young Disraeli ran delicious errands, posted to Scotland in pursuit of his editor, dined with Scott at Abbotsford, engaged reporters, appointed foreign correspondents, planned offices, was closeted with architects, and lived in a delightful whirl. Then the market broke; his City friends found a more absorbing business nearer home; and his journalistic dreams were closed abruptly.

This sad awakening left him in Bloomsbury once more, with bills to pay and haunting vistas of great men half seen and great houses almost visited. He was twenty-one, his last illusion lost. What else remained for him but to write a novel? So he transposed the theme of the stillborn paper into the key of politics, became the cool and cynical *Vivian*, portrayed his learned father, the City magnates, and the world (or as much of it as he knew) of 1825, and produced a novel in four Books. An obliging lady found him a

publisher and (with rarer kindness) copied his manuscript. Such novels of real life were modish, and the work was published with the richest titillations of anonymity. The "New Unknown" was canvassed eagerly; and Croker, Lockhart, Theodore Hook, and half-a-dozen more received the dignity of recognition as the author of *Vivian Grey*. One peer acknowledged it, whilst another denied his paternity with almost equal emphasis. There was a rage for identifying his characters; and keys were published, which generously included names far beyond the range of young Disraeli's knowledge. Much of his scene was real—or as real as he could make it—though he used actual figures rather as his *décor* than as his principals. But so much of 1825 has faded that it is almost enough to recognise a shadow of Byron in *Lord Alhambra*, a sketch of Brougham in *Foaming Fudge*, Theodore Hook in *Hoax*, an odd travesty of Lady Caroline Lamb in *Mrs. Felix Lorraine*, and the author's father in the grave scholarship of *Mr. Grey*, whilst his own sublimated self played the exacting part of *Vivian* with unfailing brilliance and a riot of high spirits.

The book succeeded; though the author renounced his country for a spell of Continental travel in slightly failing health. He had already seen the Rhine and Belgium, and now he passed a peaceful autumn in North Italy. His publisher, hot on the trail of a success, demanded a sequel, and the obedient traveller wrote four further Books of *Vivian's Odyssey*, in which he drew upon his Rhenish reminiscences. The new instalment was published early in 1827, whilst its author entered his name at Lincoln's Inn to keep his terms and eat his dinners, with the distant prospect of a call to the Bar, a horsehair wig, and a stuff gown. But once again he cheated his destiny; and perhaps *Vivian* aided his escape. For success in one career rarely tempts a man to risk failure in another. *Vivian* had succeeded. The anonymous author had won a name; still better, he had won the means of writing a frigidly triumphant letter to Albemarle Street, enclosing the exact amount of his debt



for the American pamphlets; and in the process he had produced an incomparable exercise in the social picaresque.

## 3

The author of *Vivian Grey* was tempted, like most successful authors, to repeat his first success. Having discovered his gift for social extravaganza, he was prepared to administer a second dose to a receptive public. Ill-health impeded work for eighteen months. But in 1829 he started a new novel, whose hero was to be "a model for our youth." The cheerful author foretold a popular success and trusted hopefully "that it will complete the corruption of the public taste." But Bulwer, who read the manuscript, advised the knife; and the discouraged author almost deserted his exuberant *Duke*. A publisher revived his hopes, offered £500, and (best of all) paid him in bills which an eager author could discount at once to pay for travel in the East. How could a *Duke* be better launched upon the town?

The book was sold; the bills were drawn; but the publisher, as often happens, delayed to publish, and the author's confidence evaporated until he could confess that "I don't care a jot about *The Young Duke*. I never staked any fame on it. It may take its chance. . . . After two years' confinement in these revolutionary times, I fear he will prove old-fashioned." But his confession came from Cairo; and the address, at least, he owed to the *Duke*.

It was a slightly fevered picture of the great world in 1829, with something of the mood (though something less than the fidelity) of Miss *Zuleika Dobson's* Oxford. For his fancy, well in advance of himself, visited with tremendous *verve* the most exalted quarters. "Some Americans" brought the strange news to Bradenham that it was read beyond the western horizon as a textbook of manners. Its English readers, less avid of instruction, found a kindly portrait of their late sovereign (for George IV was dead before it saw the light), more than a hint of Madame Lieven in *Princess Protocoli*, and an unforgettable St. Leger with



chibouques, and audience with Mehemet Ali, who responded to a dissertation on Parliamentary institutions with the polite ejaculation, "God is great! You are a wise man—Allah! Kerim, but you spit pearls"—and disregarded his advice with the full courtesy of the East.

The traveller returned with something more than memories. For his Oriental leisure had been favourable to composition, and a book—perhaps two books—reposed with the pipes and majo jacket in his trunk. The longer manuscript, "written with great care, after deep meditation, and in a beautiful and distant land," enshrined the third triptych of his *Selbst-porträt*—"In *Vivian Grey* I have portrayed my active and real ambition: in *Alroy* my ideal ambition: *The Psychological Romance* is a development of my poetic character. This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings—I shall write no more about myself." *Alroy*, the second panel, was still delayed; but *Contarini* appeared in 1832 during the May weeks when England swerved on the edge of revolution. This time his mild and sedentary father was transfigured as *Baron Fleming*, "a Saxon nobleman of ancient family" in the service of a northern court and married to an exquisite Venetian. Their son, a wild, unhappy youth, was modelled with a slight flourish on the author. His literary yearnings, nervous ailments, and exotic ancestry appeared in sublimated forms. Even his pride of race was subtly gilded by the setting sun of Venice. An artful touch of Popery heightened the Italian colour; and *Contarini*, his youthful mind aflame with Popes and Doges, became deliciously conscious of his "consular blood." An enigmatic painter foreshadowed the gnomic wisdom of *Sidonia*; a statesman with a piercing eye, a handkerchief waved in a jewelled hand, an airy manner, and a way with ladies—"he was deeply impressed with the influence of women"—revealed as in prophecy the strangest of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers. The exigencies of romance demanded a Borrovian episode and an interlude with slightly operatic *banditti*. Then, like his

author, *Contarini* wrote a novel about himself. He wrote his first volume in two days, his second and last in five—"the wit was too often flippant, the philosophy too often forced"—and *Manstein* enjoyed the brilliant fate of *Vivian Grey*. The intrepid novelist moved in a whirl of politics, reviews, and duels. Then, more like his author still, *Contarini* went on his travels. Their routes were strikingly similar. For after visiting Venice in search of ancestors, he saw something of Andalusia and passed on to Egypt by way of Albania, Greece, Constantinople, and the Holy Land. His amorous adventures were strictly literary; the brief ecstasy of a Turkish cavalry charge has no counterpart in fact; but the reader leaves him in Byronic retirement which his fancy transported from Bradenham to the Bay of Naples.

This blend of philosophy, romance, æsthetics, *Reisebilder*, and assorted album pieces was offered to the shrinking Murray. Lockhart was slightly puzzled; Milman, not yet a Dean, found it all "very wild, very extravagant, very German, very powerful, very poetical"; but Murray printed it with a slight alteration of the sub-title to *A Psychological Autobiography*. Beckford was gracious; Campbell promised "a psychological review"; old Madame d'Arblay wrote at length; and Heine took it all with perfect gravity, finding "passion and mockery, Gothic richness, the fantasy of the Saracens, and yet over all a classic, even a death-like repose." Small wonder that the happy author confided to his Journal that he should "always consider *The Psychological* as the perfection of English prose and a chef d'œuvre." Happy, happy author.

## 4

The caravan returned to Bradenham in 1831; and the pilgrim, fresh from Cairo and Stamboul, looked once more on High Wycombe. Six months were spent in trimming *Contarini* for the press; and that exquisite came upon the town, a shade untimely, at the very height of the Reform

fever. But another *revenant* from his travels haunted the ready writer among his father's yews. For Jerusalem had struck a spark that kindled an earlier theme. Years before, when George IV was king and Benjamin was twenty-three (now William reigned, and he was twenty-seven and a considerable author), he had toyed with a romance of Hebrew chivalry. The theme revived on the bare hillsides of Palestine; and half-written on his travels, it was completed in the first weeks of 1832. But *Contarini's* carriage stopped the way in Albemarle Street; and since that costly equipage lost money for its publisher, the cautious dignitary refused the book's successor without even the courtesy of a reading. The privilege of presenting *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* passed to another. But these vicissitudes delayed its publication; and the book did not appear until 1833 (with *Iskander* as a sort of Christian antidote), when Beckford wished for twenty volumes of it, whilst a traveller found it truly Oriental and an ecstatic lady confessed that "reading it was like riding an Arab."

The author told his tale in a medium that owed much to Byron, more to the Authorised Version, something to Scott and several touches in the later chapters to the tent scene in *Julius Cæsar*. His prose was highly coloured; there were occasional lyrics; and sometimes his cadences dropped into unrhymed verse upon "the waving of banners, the flourish of trumpets, the neighing of steeds, and the glitter of spears," which tempted an irreverent parodist to apostrophise "the curly hair and forehead fair, and nose so high and gleaming eye of Benjamin Dis-ra-e-li." The theme was lofty, though its supernatural apparatus sometimes hovered on the perilous verge of pantomime. There is a search for the sublime that recalls Martin's crowded visions of Judgment or Haydon's "a Sphinx or two, a pyramid or so." It was, in fact, an epic rather than a novel; and the facts, as became an epic, were gorgeously transfigured. It appears from the erudition of the Notes that the writer was at some pains to ascertain them. But they vanished in the sweep of his narrative, and

little trace remains of the comparatively modest tale of David Alrui or Ibn Alruchi, who appeared with a rousing summons to revolt in the Jewish settlements of Azerbaijan about the year 1160 and was murdered in his sleep by an obliging father-in-law. This hero was the occasion of a tragic disappointment to the Jews of Bagdad, who caught the Messianic note from Alrui, left all their property for disposition with two evangelists and, robed in green, sat waiting on their housetops through the night, waiting for the long night of their captivity to end, for the return to Zion, and the end of the age. But the dawn came; the evangelists absconded; and the derisive people of Bagdad long recalled with wicked glee "the Year of the Flight." Some traces of belief in Alrui's Messianic quality lingered in Azerbaijan. But his tale bore little relation to Disraeli's vision of a Judæo-Moslem Napoleon, conquering and conquered and only spared his St. Helena by a particularly brilliant repartee.

The author recognised in *Alroy* his "ideal ambition." This oracle is obscure, unless it is sufficient to detect a Jewish hero blessed, like Disraeli, with a devoted sister. For it is not easy to believe that he ever played, even in fancy, with the notion of a Jewish career. Can we forget that *Contarini's* Jerusalem was largely notable for its Christian and Moslem antiquities? And even in *Alroy*, for all its highly scented eloquence, the Jewish quality was distinctly tepid. His father's son treated Talmudic learning with friendly contempt—"The first chapter makes equal sense, read backward or forward. . . . And the initial letter of every section is a cabalistical type of a King of Judah"—and, possibly judicious, kept his ideal ambition strictly segregated from his real.

In the three years which separated *Henrietta* from the publication of *Alroy* in 1833, Disraeli's social standards had not grown less exacting. For this new hero's family "entered England with William the Norman," abounded in Domesday Book, the Crusades, Wars of the Roses, and Civil War, and flowered at length in a *beau* of the D'Orsay period.

The book had been begun in the delicious turmoil of 1834, when he enjoyed a London season, made his bow at Almack's, met Lady Blessington, told Melbourne that he meant to be Prime Minister, and lived in a delightful whirl of *fêtes* and water parties. But the loves of *Ferdinand* and *Henrietta* were laid aside, while their creator fingered the lower rungs of the political ladder. He was veering now towards the Tories, lost Wycombe once again, met Lyndhurst, joined the Carlton, and fought Taunton as a Conservative. His new friends were served in a rousing *Vindication of the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord*, a set of angry leaders in the *Morning Post*, and the rich invective of the *Letters of Runnymede*. A happy diary recorded: "Establish my character as a great political writer. . . . Resume my acquaintance with Sir Robert Peel. My influence greatly increases." . . . But the ascending rocket had its cares. Money was always scarce; and in 1836 the industrious pen was glad to note that "I have agreed to let Colburn have a novel . . . for a greater sum than I have ever yet received."

So *Henrietta* was resumed, though an anxious father warily inquired, "How will the fictionist assort with the politician?" The blend was not attempted in the book, since *Ferdinand* soared far from affairs in the empyrean of undiluted passion. The voice of cynicism was hushed. Was not his theme proclaimed "A Love Story"? Besides, the writer was no longer twenty-one. Faint echoes of the *chronique mondaine* of 1835 lent a touch of reality to his scene; D'Orsay appeared as *Count Alcibiades de Mirabel*, Crockford perhaps as *Sharpe*, and old Lady Cork with her memories of Burke and Johnson as the unquenchable *Viscountess Dowager Bellair*. For the Djinns and Afrit of his social phantasmagoria were beginning to recede within the limits of probability. He could now rely more upon memory and less on pure imagination. Vague recollections of the garrison at Malta helped to compose his hero's life; an apostrophe of debt owed much to his own financial

history ; his bailiff was sketched from life ; and perhaps a gleam of autobiography lingered on his whole study of the tender passion, although the slightly epileptic symptoms of love at first sight may seem a trifle fanciful. Lord Tennyson in later days recalled that " the ' silly sooth ' of love was given perfectly there," and wrote gracefully to " the author of that charming love story, *Henrietta Temple*." For he had known his own Henrietta in those hurried years. Did not his diary for 1836 record : " Parted for ever from Henrietta. Returned to Bradenham at the latter end of August ; concluded *Henrietta Temple* " ? An accomplished lady had taught him something of love and more of debt ; and both lessons were turned skilfully to account in *Henrietta*, where the rustle of real petticoats is more audible than in any other part of Disraeli's work.

The year 1836 was dire in the financial annals of Disraeli. The consequences of his London life with Lady Blessington and D'Orsay still lay heavy on his resources. Even his movements were restricted by the ignoble danger of arrest, and caution confined him to the sheltering walls of Bradenham. A fascinating chance of dinner at the Carlton with Peel and the late Tory Cabinet was reluctantly declined (" Is it safe ? I fear not " ) ; and an invitation to propose " The House of Lords " at his County Conservative dinner aroused grave fears " of my being nabbed, as this would be a fatal *contretemps*, inasmuch as, in all probability, I am addressing my future constituents." In this confinement the fires of literary composition were banked : " With the exception of county business I have not quitted my room for the last ten weeks. I have now written five octavo volumes, i.e. the novel about to be published, and two more of another, which I calculate finishing by the end of the year." The first was *Henrietta Temple*, the second *Venetia*, and his fevered Muse even threatened a third. Both books were written at a distracted hand-gallop ; but there were compensations— " If the results are what my publisher anticipates, and I am able to complete this engagement, I think between £3,000



and £4,000 might be poured into my coffers by May." "I am resolved," he wrote gleefully, "to ruin Colburn."

So he sat scribbling through the winter. 1837 came, and February found him with "only 150 pages, or less, of my book to finish, which I ought to canter through in the remainder of the month"; although the faces of his creditors had an unpleasing tendency to "mix themselves up, by some damnable process, with the radiant countenance of my heroine, and thought visions of spunging-houses might have been in keeping with last vol. of *Henrietta Temple*, they do not accord quite so well with the more ethereal scenes of the fair *Venetia*." For that romance was an ingenious effort to turn to quick account his knowledge of a famous figure. His hero was the hero of all European youth from 1820 to 1848—the moody Childe, the fascinating Don, Lara, the Corsair, all the varied incarnations which had died at Missolonghi with Lord Byron. Was not Byron's gondolier, acquired at Malta in 1830, an exotic feature of the Disraelis' staff at Bradenham? His moods, his mother, and his Muse all make their appearance with *Plantagenet Cadurcis*; and the portrait lives, although the loves of *Plantagenet* and *Venetia* were (as became this theme of high romance) less real than those of *Ferdinand* and *Henrietta*. Shelley, in middle life and thoughtfully provided with a set of sonnets, appears as *Herbert*; and the story was transposed, for the avoidance of scandal, into the Eighteenth Century with singular results on Shelley, who enjoys a brilliant career as an American general in the War of Independence. The other portraits follow suit—the easy indolence of Melbourne in *Monteagle*, and Lady Caroline Lamb none too tastefully portrayed as *Lady Monteagle*. Written at speed, his story verges more frequently than usual on the novelette. But even after Byron and Shelley had been consigned to a common grave in the Gulf of Spezzia, it contrived to reach a happy ending; and the beleaguered author, paid at last, emerged from his entrenchments.

The book appeared in May. That June King William died ; and an eager acolyte drove with Lord Lyndhurst to wait outside " a palace in a garden," where a young Queen in black received her Council. Within a month the ardent Tory fought his fifth election, and Disraeli was returned for Maidstone in the first Parliament of Queen Victoria.

## 5

The member for Maidstone was not idle. Scarcely perturbed by a disastrous *début*, he surveyed the first Parliament of Queen Victoria from a seat behind Sir Robert Peel. That eye, which had beheld Jerusalem, watched the slow waning of the Whigs ; and in the spectacle his " ideal ambition " was quite forgotten for his " real." The cravings of his earlier romance—turbans and scimitars, the Golden Horn, his ancient race, and the insistent (if slightly Byronic) call of the East—grew fainter now. Even the apparition of the City Sheriffs elicited nothing beyond a mildly contemptuous reference to " Sir Bob or Tom, and Sir Moses, and no mistake," followed by the almost audible relief which breathes in his report of a debate on " the Jew question," when " nobody looked at me, and I was not at all uncomfortable, but voted in the majority with the utmost sangfroid." For never less *Alroy*, he was *Vivian Grey* once more.

But though the old romance was fading, the incurable romantic found fresh themes for his unresting fancy. As he watched the sober course of English politics, where Melbourne yawned at Lord John Russell, that eager alchemy was busy with its magic, and the unheroic scene was soon transfigured in his imagination. The House of Commons became a temple of strange mysteries, the Speaker's chair a more than Delphic tripod ; dull receptions buzzed with esoteric whispers ; Whips looked Sibylline ; even the Carlton Club grew almost queer ; and younger sons returned by family boroughs glowed in his fancy as figures of chivalry caparisoned for unknown quests. But as the political apprentice felt his ardour kindle, his pen was almost idle. A few

papers in *The Times*, signed "Cœur de Lion" and couched in Carlylese, explored the topic of *Old England*; some letters of "Lælius" expounded royal errors in the uproar of the Bedchamber *imbroglio*; and a tragedy in verse provided an appropriate vehicle for the loftier emotions which led him to the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square, with Mrs. Wyndham Lewis. This brave experiment, a celebration of the heroic age of Spanish chivalry composed by her excited wooer under the immediate inspiration of a paper inscribed "in large characters" with the name MARY ANNE, is rich in interest. Its history was uncertain—"As there is no historical authority for the events of the celebrated Ballad on which this Tragedy is founded, I have fixed upon the thirteenth century for the period of their occurrence." But the author, if love letters may be believed, poured his personal emotions into the stately, almost too stately, procession of its blank verse; Macready read and Monckton Milnes admired it; and it was even tested on the boards of Astley's Theatre thirty years later, when its author was Prime Minister. But *Count Alarcos* still remains a "collector's piece," a Curiosity (to use the family term) of Literature in the same class as Frederick's odes, Lord Palmerston's light verse, and Napoleon's novel. With these exceptions and an open letter to the Duke, which made delicious reference to "the aquiline supremacy of the Cæsars," his Muse deserted him in the pleasant flutter of the years between 1837 and 1843, whilst the delighted author made his first steps as lover, bridegroom, husband, and politician; and his wife could write truthfully to his leader, "Literature he has abandoned for politics."

But politics in those accomplished hands began to acquire an individual flavour. He was a zealous party man; the Whigs were duly flayed; and yet his Tory allegiance was oddly diversified by sudden outcrops of his early Radical opinions. The People's Charter somehow failed to shock him; and the House was gratified with an intimation that he was "not ashamed or afraid to say that I sympathise with

millions of my fellow-subjects," a Chartist leader with the novel intelligence that "an union between the Conservative party and the Radical masses offers the only means by which we can preserve the Empire." This brilliant skirmishing obtained for him a summons to Sir Robert's "Shadow Cabinet"—"the only one who had not been in office." His skies were bright; the Whigs were failing fast; and seals of office dangled in a not too distant prospect. 1840, barren in his bibliography except for some trivial Egyptian *Reisebilder* contributed to the *Keepsake*, was a happy year. The fruit was ripe; an eager husbandman stood waiting; but it never fell. For when the Fates of 1841 conducted Peel to Downing Street once more, Peel, alas! omitted to take Disraeli with him. Opposition virtues are not always identical with official promise. Perhaps a Croker whispered; perhaps a Stanley was intolerant. But no red boxes came to Grosvenor Gate, no Windsor uniform adorned its master. The blow was cruel; and it elicited an appeal of rare poignancy from Disraeli, a naïve note from Mary Anne. So as Robert settled into office, that accomplished *guerrillero* hung ominously on the flanks of Toryism. But even the intermittent pleasures of irregular warfare are denied to solitaries; and a happy chance provided the new Robin Hood with a congenial band. For what could be more congenial than a band of younger sons?

Eton and Cambridge, blameless pedigree, had launched a little group upon an unobservant world. They read books together, argued, lived in one another's rooms, and shared with touching sympathy a small stock of ideas. All Tories, they regarded the Conservative compromise with a vague discontent. Peel's appetite for Registration seemed ignoble to those students of the Golden Age; the saints of their adoration—Byron, Scott, Bolingbroke, Strafford, King Charles—were pre-Reform, almost pre-Reformation. A charming affectation found solutions for all modern problems in the Middle Ages and discovered in the words *noblesse oblige* a whole policy of social reform. These notions were embodied

in lively declamations or in spirited verse, of which the least favourable example is Lord John Manners' hapless couplet :

Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,  
But leave us still our old Nobility.

Thackeray caught something of the note in the mild malice of his " Lines upon my Sister's Portrait, by the Lord South-down " :

The castle towers of Bareacres are fair upon the lea,  
Where the cliffs of bonny Diddlesex rise up from out the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

I stood upon the donjon keep : it is a sacred place,  
Where floated for eight hundred years the banner of my race—  
Argent, a dexter sinople, and gules an azure field,  
There ne'er was nobler cognizance on knightly warrior's shield.

\* \* \* \* \*

O knights, my noble ancestors ! and shall I never hear  
St. Willibald for Bareacres through battle ringing clear ?

\* \* \* \* \*

I'll hie me to my lonely hall, and by its cheerless hob  
I'll muse on other days and wish—and wish I were—

A SNOB.

This archaism, always a little conscious of its own quarterings, was the young gentlemen's distinctive mode which kept them, in the appreciative words of *James de la Pluche*, " always writing about battleaxis and shivvlerly." Such graceful heterodoxy left them on the margin of all parties, half Radicals, half Tories, " the *albeit* school ; Catholics *albeit* we are Anglicans ; free from Rome *albeit* near to antiquity ; Jacobites *albeit* sub-Guelphians . . . boys in heart *albeit* men in years ; lakers *albeit* not of the lake school "—charming young Ishmaels, their hands against every man, and ripe for mischief.

These stalwarts sat on the Tory benches in the new Parliament which gave Peel his majority, and soon they swam into Disraeli's ken. Something in his romance answered to

theirs : they, too, were apt to fix upon the thirteenth century for the occurrence of events for which there was a lack of historical authority. He shared their consciousness of quarterings. Besides, they hated Whigs, despised Conservatives, and (best of all) they were cadets of noble houses. There were approaches, dinners, interviews in Paris ; and before long Young England—George Smythe, John Manners, Alexander Baillie Cochrane, with a vague prospect of Monckton Milnes and Henry Beresford-Hope and a still vaguer one of John Walter and *The Times*—sat and voted with Disraeli. So they found a leader, and that lonely mutineer found followers. The tiny party wrote gallant letters asking to be laid “ at the little feet ” of Mrs. Disraeli, almost changed its name to “ the Diz-Union,” and addressed its “ dear Cid and Captain ” with a fervent loyalty. The new leader’s mind was full of projects for fresh converts, for newspapers to be controlled, for an entirely novel foreign policy based on a hint from Louis Philippe. But recruits were oddly unwelcome. For his three supporters yielded to the temptation, which besets all groups, of remaining a conspiracy. For a clique is vastly more entertaining than a party. So they conspired and, conscious of their fitness, insisted on remaining few ; and Young England ended, as it began, a *partie carrée*.

But before it ended, it had inspired a literature. Its paladins wrote prose or verse with equal ease and dedicated them to one another. John Manners in *England’s Trust* and *A Plea for National Holy-Days*, George Smythe in *Historic Fancies*, had struck the note. But the full trumpet-call was sounded by their leader “ amid the glades and galleries of the DEEPDENE.” He was staying with Beresford-Hope in the autumn of 1843. George Smythe, a fellow-guest, observed the “ gloomy Dis.” busy with his Proserpine and fascinating Hope with the strange virtuosity of his Churchmanship. Their host suggested that he should throw the doctrines of Young England into a novel ; and he began to write. The house-party was in September. November came, and he

was writing hard. But the whole book—one hundred and fifty thousand words of assorted brilliance, rhapsody, romance, and history—was finished before the winter was out; and he dated it, in gentle allusion to the Maypoles and Merrie England of John Manners' dream, "May Day 1844."

They were all in it—George Smythe as *Coningsby*, Manners as *Henry Sydney*, Cochrane as *Buckhurst*. Lord Palmerston, reading novels in the comfortable shades of Opposition, sent an admirable key to his brother at Naples: "You will recognise Croker in *Rigby*, Lord Hertford in *Monmouth*, Lowther in *Eskdale*, Irving in *Ormsby*, Madame Zichy in *Lucretia*, but not Lady Strachan in *Countess Colonna*, though the character is evidently meant to fill her place in the family party." *Millbank*, erroneously identified by later readers as Gladstone, was a shadow of John Walter; and the author's brief experience of Paris *salons* was richly drawn upon to furnish scenes in which Molé, Humboldt, and Decazes appear deliciously concealed among their sumptuous surroundings as *M—é*, *H—t*, and *D—s*, and even a Rothschild was shrouded in the arch mystery of *R—d*. He took the stage himself as *Sidonia*, the pale brunet, whose aphorisms and horsemanship were equally above reproach. But the *Selbst-porträt* was slightly composite, since his embodiment combined the familiar curls and manner with a banker's income, emerging from the blend as a financier of unusual gifts or a politician with still less usual finances—as, in fine, Disrothschild.

Real figures abounded under their own names—the Duke with "his curt, husky manner"; Peel, "the great man in a great position, summoned from Rome to govern England"; Lord Liverpool, "the Arch-Mediocrity who presided rather than ruled"; John Russell with "the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to date that which his intellect assures him is politic"; and King Louis Philippe disclosing a resemblance, not elsewhere recognised, to "ULYSSES!" The history, if sometimes disputable, was always vivid;

and the portraits were spirited in the extreme. Croker's displays an unaccountable malignity, and students of the *Croker Papers* will search in vain for the more odious characteristics of *Mr. Rigby*. But *Lord Monmouth* bears comparison with that other shadow of its original, *Lord Steyne*. The book was a gallery of historical episode—of the hurry of the May Days in 1832, of 1834 fluttering in the Tory resurrection, of the Whig decline in the first years of the new reign, and Tory expectancy in 1841. Its author managed his narrative of historical events with a swing and *tempo* attained by too few historians; and his social gusto was quite undiminished by experience of the great world. Its extravagance was gently castigated by Thackeray in the opulent *décor* of *Codlingsby*—"I am tired of Schloss Schinkenstein; the Rhine bores me after a while. It is too hot for Florence; besides, they have not completed the picture-gallery, and my place smells of putty. You wouldn't have a man, *mon cher*, bury himself in his château in Normandy, out of the hunting season? The Rugantino Palace stupefies me. Those Titians are so gloomy, I shall have my Hobbimas and Tenierses, I think, from my house at the Hague hung over them"; or "The carpet was of white velvet (laid over several webs of Aubusson, Ispahan, and Axminster, so that your foot gave no more sound as it trod upon the yielding plain than the shadow did which followed you)—of white velvet, painted with flowers, arabesques, and classic figures, by Sir William Ross, J. M. W. Turner, R.A., Mrs. Mee, and Paul Delaroche . . ."; and the richer burlesque of "Miriam, returning to the mother-of-pearl music stool, at a signal from her brother, touched the silver and enamelled keys of the ivory piano."

But its *décor* was less important than its politics, since the real heroes and villains of *Coningsby* are political ideas. Perhaps the villain was the Tamworth Manifesto, "an attempt to construct a party without principles"; and the compromise of Peelite Conservatism is hissed off the stage whenever it appears—"an unhappy cross-breed; the mule



of politics that engenders nothing. . . . A sound Conservative Government," said Taper, musingly. "I understand: Tory men and Whig measures." But as Sir Robert's unhappy invention vanishes, like a pantomime demon, down its trap-door, the author's brighter light is concentrated on the brow of its triumphant rival, Young England. His first design was to include a full exposition of its political principles, social policy, and Church opinions. But social policy was adjourned for *Sybil*; religion was barely sketched in the shadowy Semitism of *Sidonia*, and waited for *Tancred*; and party politics alone remain. On that side, however, the group's ideas received full treatment, from their distaste for Peel to a kindly portrait (sometimes touched, one feels, with a gentle irony) of their engaging mediævalism, generously bent on bettering the Condition of England by a liberal policy of almsgiving and vestments among the ponies and peacocks of their country houses. For Disraeli seemed to feel something of the mild scepticism which Monckton Milnes expressed in his *Lines to a Judge by a culprit actuated with Young England sentiments* :—

Oh ! flog me at the old cart's tail.  
I surely should enjoy  
That fine old English punishment  
I witnessed when a boy !  
I should not heed the mocking crowd,  
I should not feel the pain,  
If *one* old English custom  
Could be brought back again !

The book succeeded wildly, as it deserved to. A thousand copies went in a fortnight, and three editions in three months. The world played at its favourite game of recognising portraits; and it has received the more solemn homage of literary historians recognising the dawn of the political novel. The dawn cannot be doubted. For Disraeli, to whom politics were almost unnaturally romantic, brought them within the range of romance. But was it followed by a day? Apart from its own author's writings, is there

in English a political novel of standing? If not, one fears that *Sidonia*, like his inventor, left no heir. But *Coningsby* is more than a *roman à clef* or the birth of a questionable literary mode. For its author's fancy played with unexampled brilliance over the politics of two generations; and once at least, in the unforgettable extravagances of *Taper* and *Tadpole*, he contributed to English humour two genuine creations, who will endure as long as the memory of the party system.

## 6

The great design inspired by Henry Beresford-Hope "amid the glades and galleries of the DEEPDENE" unfolded rapidly. For was not Young England to have an epic manifesto from its leader's pen? May Day, 1844, had seen *Coningsby* define "the state of Parties," announcing "in an age of political infidelity" the place that a regenerated Toryism might fill in the party system, if it recoiled with equal distaste from Peel's decadent Conservatism and the odious heresies of the Whigs. The lesson was continued on May Day, 1845. For on that auspicious date *Sybil*, with something of John Manners' respect for *National Holy-Days*, defined the group's opinions on "the state of the People," and offered in its Dedication a singularly graceful homage to Mary Anne.

The interval between the books had seen their author flash into mutiny against his leader. For the Tory malcontent was now an open rebel; and the Treasury Bench was douched with irony by a low voice from a pale, unmoving face, whilst an easy hand caressed a hip or an indifferent thumb sought artlessly for the armhole of a waistcoat. His *banderillas* fluttered in the back of every Minister; but the *espada* was reserved for Peel, veering uneasily towards Free Trade and watched by a suspicious party. The Prime Minister's quotation of a hackneyed couplet on "the candid friend" provoked a searing comment on his apostasy from Canning—"Some lines . . . upon friendship, written by Mr.

Canning, and quoted by the right hon. gentleman! The theme, the poet, the speaker—what a felicitous combination!" There was a deep-chested intimation that "a Conservative Government is an organised hypocrisy"; and the final dismissal of his leader's record—"so mechanical, and yet so Machiavellian . . . a humdrum hocus-pocus"—rang in Peel's angry ears. The rosy gentlemen, who saw their rents endangered by the same cool hand which had capitulated to Reform and Catholic Emancipation, roared their approval; and Disraeli approached a loftier eminence than the titular leadership of George Smythe, Baillie Cochran, and John Manners.

But he was faithful to Young England; and *Sybil*, finished at his usual break-neck speed in these exciting weeks, defined their social creed with some indication of the group's preferences in Church affairs. Once more there was a lively panorama of politics, with a romantic picture of the Queen's first Council "in a palace in a garden," and a brisk evocation of the fluttered dovescotes in the Bedchamber crisis of 1839. But against that shifting background the spectre of industrialism was deftly raised; though the magician, when challenged to exorcise it, did little more than make picturesque and ineffectual passes. For Young England had scarcely got beyond murmuring *noblesse oblige*, a dubious solvent of the industrial tangle. They seemed to realise the problem, even to explore its dark recesses; but the bearings which they took were mainly armorial bearings. So the novelist surveyed the field of English history from the Norman Conquest to the Chartist movement; and Young England's fist was shaken impartially at the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution.

The theme was boldly stated—a gilded society, light-minded politicians, and a young Queen called to reign over "two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed

by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws."

"You speak of——" said Egremont, hesitatingly.

"THE RICH AND THE POOR."

The note was daring, and the author sustained it by an unusual recourse to facts. For he had secured some Chartist correspondence, studied the Reports of the Commission on Children's Employment, and even founded his topography on recollections of the industrial North. *Marney Abbey* was a memory of Fountains, *Mowbray Church* of Ripon; and John Manners had once startled Mrs. Disraeli by climbing up the original of "the Druid's altar." His facts were sound, in spite of an uncertain command of Northern dialect and a Trade Union whose ritual of skulls and battleaxes displays a mildly incongruous affiliation to pantomime or the Ku-Klux-Klan. But he caught the Chartist note. His marching crowds have the authentic tramp that had brought the miners down from Pontypool to Newport in '39; and in his high colouring he painted a far from ineffective picture of the growing hunger of the Forties.

The politics were sketched with his accustomed brilliance. Historians of the Bedchamber Plot might do worse than study *Taper* and *Tadpole* at that supreme moment of their fortunes, when "wrong-headed, rebellious ministers who would not go out wore—petticoats," and the clubs gasped at the spectacle of "Conservatism, that mighty mystery of the nineteenth century . . . brained by a fan." The Whig nobility was richly indicted, and the indictment rested upon some slightly questionable eighteenth-century history, although there was a brilliant rediscovery of Lord Shelburne—"one of the suppressed characters of English history"—founded on genuine research, which even brought the author into correspondence with Lord Lansdowne. His portrait of Wellington, though disputable, was almost full-length;

Palmerston makes a shadowy appearance as *Lord Protocol*; and Peel is spitefully portrayed as "a gentleman in Downing Street," instructing an underling in the art of duping deputations. But portraits of real persons are far less common than was usual with Disraeli; and for the most part we keep the more dispiriting company of "types"—types of Whig noblemen, of employers good or bad, of Chartist agitators, place-hunters, and working-men. *Lord Valentine* gracefully typifies Young England, and the political hostesses are faint shadows of Lady Jersey and Lady Londonderry. But the author was largely content to draw his characters from his own fancy; and out of that strange abyss, smoky with reminiscences of lost Blue Books and vanished *Keepsakes*, he drew the tale of *Sybil*, the Chartist's daughter and the rightful heiress.

## 7

The great design, with which *Coningsby* had been begun, was still unfinished. The bravoës of Young England still waited for the conclusion of their leader's epic manifesto—waited, indeed, too long. For the group dissolved before the third panel of his triptych could be completed. Its first instalment had menaced party managers and leaders with the advent of the *New Generation*; its next revealed the tragic division of the Queen's subjects into the *Two Nations*; but it still remained to enlighten the Church upon its "duties . . . as a main remedial agency in our present state." This task employed Disraeli in the quiet autumn recess of 1845, which he spent in the wide prospects and Flemish cookery of a hired French house at Cassel. But in December Peel, a sudden convert to Free Trade, resigned and was recalled to office, while the Duke grunted, "Rotten potatoes have done it all—they put Peel in his damned fright," and his country gentlemen looked on aghast. Disraeli leapt to the attack; and as the "sad, fierce session" of 1846 wore on, his invectives rose in a steadily ascending scale. Peel was abused in every tone at his command; and delighted landowners roared their

approval, as the strange, dishevelled figure expended treasuries of scorn on the Prime Minister's apostasy. The Corn Laws were repealed. But on the very night of the last vote in the House of Lords the Government were beaten in the Commons. The country gentlemen—Disraeli enumerated them later in a Homeric catalogue that filled two loving pages in his *Lord George Bentinck*—trooped through the lobby for their revenge; and Peel, his task accomplished, was hounded out of office.

Such ardours left Disraeli little leisure for the completion of his novel. But he escaped to Bradenham in the autumn, and work was resumed "among those beechen groves of Bucks, which even Julius Cæsar could not penetrate." The new session found him, soberly attired in black, on the Front Bench, a Tory notable at last and well on the way to leadership. But in March, 1847, *Tancred* announced once more his coat of many colours. Opening in Mayfair—the Mayfair, lovingly described, of 1845 where Mr. Thackeray's *Jeames* exchanged nods with French *chefs* in blue frogged coats and the most Disraelian of green trouserings—the *New Crusade* moved, like its predecessors, on Jerusalem. But before it left, there was a brilliant evocation of the London scene with Young England, ageing a little now but still assiduous at parties. George Smythe and John Manners flitted once more across his screen as *Coningsby* and *Henry Sidney*—rare instance of a mis-spelt *alias*; *Sybil* appears in married happiness; and Monckton Milnes was added to the group as *Vavasour*, in deference to the almost tearful protests provoked by his omission from the earlier chronicles. Wellington is seen as "the dictator," asleep on the red benches of the House of Lords; and Peel's debating manner receives a final thrust. But there was no more need for onslaughts on Conservatism. For Peel was out. Besides, the author sat sedately next to Lord George Bentinck, well in the running for Tory leadership. *Sidonia* presides more enigmatically than ever over the money market in a phantasmagoria of New Court, soothing ambassadors, financing railways, and

assisting wavering young gentlemen in search of spiritual consolation towards "the Great Asian mystery"—Disrothschild still.

But the real figures seem to fade, as the novelist propels his hero towards the East—his darling East, still rich with travel memories of 1831. Once more the yataghan, the fez, the turban, and the long chibouque. The mutter of bazaars sounds in his ears again with the low whisper of divans. The East goes by; and a delighted pen traces its long, luxuriant names like incantations—*Fakredeem*, *Barizy of the Gate*, *Ibrahim-ben-Hassan*, *Scheriff Effendi*, and the rich catalogue of "Beni Kahtan, Beni Kelb, Beni Salem, Beni Sobh, Beni Ghamed, Beni Seydan, Beni Ali, Beni Hateym." The spiritual objects of *the New Crusade* seem almost to be forgotten in the delights of local colour; and Disraeli's Templar, recoiling from a too worldly Bishop of London and his uninspired Church, flying in equal horror from the pre-Darwinian dawn of Evolution and harnessed for his sacred mission with the darkest of *Sidonia's* riddles, turns Oriental at the first wave of that compelling wand.

Indeed, the main interest of the book lies in the quality of Disraeli's Orientalism. Externally, perhaps, his East had much in common with the *Keepsakes* and the *Landscape Annual*; and it is not surprising that Lady Blessington accepted it as a revelation, or even that the author invariably re-read *Tancred* when he desired to refresh his own knowledge of those regions. But it had a deeper note. Himself a Christian, he could not bear to figure in the Church as a late convert; and his pride dictated a strange philosophy of Christian history, in which the Church appears as "a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles." The Jew, in his theory, was a proto-Christian, the Christian a completed Jew. His Semitism was sometimes a shade malicious, as when he announced that "the life of a British peer is mainly regulated by Arabian laws and Syrian customs," or the Jewish heroine naïvely asks his hero, "Pray, are you of those

Franks who worship a Jewess ; or of those other who revile her, break her images, and blaspheme her pictures ? ” But it represented his own attempt to reconcile his inner feelings with the irrevocable accident of his baptism. Sometimes it had another aspect, when he turned from religion to the racial consequences of Jewish birth. His oracles upon this point were less elusive. “ All,” he proclaimed, “ is race ; there is no other truth.” Fortified with this conviction, he derived immense satisfaction from the contemplation of Jewish destinies. It is notable, perhaps, that his Jerusalem was now far more Jewish than in *Contarini*’s time, although the prophet was wholly incapable of distinguishing Jews from Arabs. “ The Arabs,” he announced, “ are only Jews upon horseback.” The Desert haunted him—“ The decay of a race is an inevitable necessity, unless it lives in deserts and never mixes its blood ”—and his hero embarked upon a wild Hegira with the profound (but scarcely Jewish) conviction that “ a man might climb Mount Carmel, and utter three words which would bring the Arabs again to Granada, and perhaps further.” It was a strange *farrago* erected by his pride, perhaps, to enable him to face with a level eye the Tory gentlemen around him, “ sprung from a horde of Baltic pirates, who were never heard of during the greater annals of the world. . . . What we should have known, had not the Syro-Arabian creeds formed our minds, I dare not contemplate ”—strange doctrine for a lieutenant of Lord George Bentinck, but not without its consolations.

*The New Crusade* proceeded to this wild accompaniment. Once it deviated into a memory of his Flemish autumn at Cassel, and it was punctuated in the echoes of the Syrian crisis of 1840. The triumph of Lord Palmerston was celebrated with a rapture unusual among Tories, “ beyond the happiest achievement of the elder Pitt ” ; and the bazaars rang with his name—a key, perhaps, to Palmerstonian echoes in the author’s later Eastern policy. A stranger echo hangs in the odd rhapsody of *Fakredeen*, which enthroned Victoria at Delhi as Empress of India. So *Tancred*, his religious



doubts almost forgotten, found peace with his incomparable *Eva* in a spiritual No Man's Land, half-way between Christianity and Judaism; whilst his creator's fancy—sometimes alert, sometimes, alas! drowsy with poppycock—ranges a borderland of Jew and Arab, Europe and Asia, past and present, fact and historic fancy, in what must surely be the strangest book ever written on the Front Bench.

## 8

An unknown boy wrote *Vivian Grey* at twenty-two to pay a debt; a rising Tory, just turned forty, wrote *Coningsby* and *Sybil* to gratify Young England and completed the trilogy with *Tancred*. But his next novel waited more than twenty years (for novelists who enter politics run peculiar risks); and the author of *Lothair* was an ex-Premier of sixty-six with gout.

Few novelists are capable of twenty years of silence. But in Disraeli's case no effort was required, since his alternative career opened more ample vistas. He had written *Coningsby* as an almost isolated leader of revolt against Sir Robert Peel. When *Tancred* appeared in 1847, he was the loyal adjutant of Lord George Bentinck and the favourite orator of the Protectionists. Within two years he was their leader in the House of Commons; and party leaders have little leisure for the Muses. Westminster absorbed him, although the visible reward was slight; for Toryism lived mainly in Opposition. His pen, however, was not wholly idle, since he commemorated his lost leader in the strange blend of memoir and polemic entitled, *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography*, which fluttered the doves of 1851. The Parliamentary history of the past decade was vigorously dramatised; under his pen the Protectionist revolt of 1846 assumed almost Cromwellian proportions; and there was a queer excursus on the Jewish question, which followed lines familiar to readers of *Tancred*. In the next year the Tories flitted through Downing Street, and Disraeli sat in his first Cabinet as Chancellor of the Exchequer, a mildly startled

Sovereign finding that "Mr. Disraeli (*alias* Dizzy) writes very curious reports to me of the House of Commons proceedings—much in the style of his books." The interlude, alas! was brief; and he was soon condemned once more to the more sterile ardours of Opposition, where his pen found congenial employment in the confection of highly controversial leading articles. For a Tory group, at his impulsion, had founded a weekly paper named (somewhat immodestly) *The Press*, where he fulminated happily against Lord Aberdeen's uncomfortable Coalition of Whigs and Peelites. He wrote steadily through 1853 (though in the utmost secrecy), with angry castigations of Aberdeen—"qualified to be the Minister of a second-rate German State"—and a cheerful fling in his own Budget speech as, "in our opinion, much too long, and savouring somewhat of the Yankee school of rhetoric." But his functions as leader-writer closed in 1854, although for two years longer the editor waited upon him in the Lobby regularly for weekly inspiration. Such are the shadowy and unsatisfying contacts of party leaders with the Muses.

It was almost ten years now since *Tancred*. But Opposition still engrossed him. A second decade passed slowly by without a page of prose, whilst he sat nightly in the House of Commons warmed by a deepening dislike of Mr. Gladstone. For that judicious Peelite was now the rising, if slightly incalculable, hope of the stern unbending Whigs; and Toryism stirred in vain against the bland dictatorship of Palmerston. Once a brief interval of office cheered him, and he returned to the Treasury. But the Tories failed again; their nomadic Chancellor of the Exchequer passed on his way; and as the cold shades of Opposition closed in once more, he was left to point an angry finger across the despatch box at Palmerston's unvarying smile or at the chillier presence of Mr. Gladstone, presently dignified as Prime Minister and "the People's William." The years went by; *Tancred* was twenty years behind him and Peel and Bentinck far beyond the mists, when he was Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer once again. But in the next year Derby, his often exasperating and always unreliable leader, retired at last ; and for eleven glorious months in 1868 Disraeli was Prime Minister. No time for novels now, though Majesty itself had just advanced to authorship in *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, and Disraeli's murmur of "We authors, Ma'am . . ." conveyed a delicious hint of equality. Life was a stirring round of policies to be decided, of Bishops and even Archbishops to be selected, Governors-General to be appointed, and positively Dukes—"What does Ben know of dukes?"—to be created. But Mr. Gladstone and a General Election set a term to these delights ; and he was out again in 1869. A judicious publisher promptly offered £10,000 for his next novel, and was refused politely. But old tastes were stirring in him ; and he sat writing in his study without a word even to the faithful Corry. So that confidant knew nothing, until he read in a publisher's advertisement that *Lothair* was to appear early in 1870.

It opened with enormous gusto in his most ducal atmosphere (even the dedication was to a French royal duke) among a noble family that bore a strong resemblance to that of his own creation, the Duke of Abercorn. But the *Duke*, his consummate mate, and their peerless issue were still more comfortably provided for by the attribution of several residences belonging to the Duke of Sutherland. For *Brentham*, which Disraeli savoured with a tongue that came perilously near an ancient cheek, was plainly Trentham ; and the visitor to Stafford House may still recognise the glories that awed him into almost sacramental capitals in honour of CRECY HOUSE. In these sublime surroundings *Lothair* pursued his spiritual Odyssey. The story had its milder moments. Curates were seen at croquet ; the author stooped his wing to poke a little august fun at Bayswater ; and there were even Americans, a strange addition to his repertory which rarely included figures unknown to Byron or *Debreit*. His hero, whose intellectual wild oats were sown with a slightly laborious hand, was a shadowy reflection

of that Lord Bute, whose conversion to Rome had so recently agitated Anglican firesides. But *Lothair's* Hegira was more varied ; since, unlike his prototype, he merely dallied with Rome, wooed the International, followed the red-shirts to Mentana, and finally was rescued by the blameless hand of the Established Church. The genteel Popish Plot of 1868 was deftly portrayed ; *Cardinal Grandison* combined the ascetic mask of Manning with the livelier policies of Wiseman, and a perspicuous misprint in the first edition revealed Mgr. Capel as *Monsignore Catesby*. His revolutionary underworld was more transpontine in its sources, though *Mirandola* was a shadow of Mazzini, *Drolin* telescoped Ledru-Rollin, and *Captain Bruges* has been identified with General Cluseret, who flitted through insurrectionary shadows bound for the Commune. His Anglican *Bishop* was manifestly Wilberforce ; and Professor Goldwin-Smith, who had once used his pen against Disraeli, angrily recognised himself in the unpleasant features of the *Professor*.

Success was prompt and thorough. Editions poured from the press. A colt, a ship, a perfume, and a galop were named *Lothair*, while *Corisande* baptised a waltz, a song, and Baron de Rothschild's filly. Only the critics seemed a little doubtful. But they had been answered in advance by *Mr. Phæbus* : " You know who the critics are ? The men who have failed in literature and art "—a gibe from which unnumbered failures have derived infinite consolation. But the author of *Lothair* reposed, superior to critics, in graceful Opposition while the indomitable Mr. Gladstone attacked the melancholy branches of the Irish upas tree.

Perhaps a gentle interest attaches to one of his rare references (now almost blasphemous) to the flower, with which a slightly eccentric piety has linked his name. *Coningsby* had one remarked that eggs, when served with bacon, resemble " tufts of primroses." And now, " ' They say primroses make a capital salad,' said Lord St. Jerome." What a text for a Primrose Day sermon !

## 9

*Lothair* had been a triumph. While Mr. Longman sold his thousands, a New York publisher sold his tens of thousands, and Baron Tauchnitz offered the tribute of a captivated Europe. "Lothair-mania" raged quite unabated through the hot summer of 1870. Even the sudden outbreak of a war between France and Germany scarcely availed to check it; and in the autumn a wise publisher launched on the favouring tide a collected edition of the Novels, to which their author appended a *General Preface*. In this interesting piece Disraeli glanced at his press-cuttings, surveyed the American reviewers with a mildly patronising eye, but in something of the mood of satisfaction with which Dr. Johnson had received the comforting intelligence that he was to be "read on the banks of the Wolga," and then succumbed with gusto to the temptation of answering his critics. These vanquished with a fling at "critics who, abstractedly, do not approve of successful books, particularly if they have failed in the same style; social acquaintances . . . whose public life has not exactly realised the vain dreams of their fussy existence," and a final (if slightly recondite) thrust at "the race of the Dennises, the Oldmixons, and Curls, who flatter themselves that by systematically libelling some eminent personage of their times, they have a chance of descending to posterity," the triumphant author turned to himself and sketched with a free hand his literary autobiography. Such documents are often of uneven value. But Disraeli's, from its slightly imaginative opening ("Born in a library . . .") to its happy close among the innumerable notices of *Lothair* forwarded by an unnamed "American gentleman," is chiefly interesting for the comparatively indulgent eye with which it viewed his early work, and for a careful exposition of the ideas that underlay the Young England novels. It was a little strange for Conservatives in 1870 to receive the rebel manifesto of 1844 from their leader's pen.

But that instrument continued to be active; and the ex-

Premier, a novelist once more, resolved to repeat his triumph in a new novel. The first chapters were composed while Mr. Gladstone's *Grand Ministère* veered towards unpopularity; and while the Free Trade Hall rang with Disraeli's cryptic praises of "*Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*," and the famous image of the Treasury Bench as "one of those marine landscapes not very uncommon on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea"—his pen was busy with the opening passages of *Endymion*. But the times grew less propitious to his Muse. The rising tide of Tory Opposition claimed its leader's time, and his peace of mind was shattered by the loss of Mary Anne. The first dark months of 1873 were passed in exile at a West End hotel, where the faithful Corry mothered him, or his sister Countesses of Chesterfield and Bradford provided a blameless distraction, which provoked an ambassador to the unworthy comment that his society was "*toutes grand'mères*." But the pace quickened as Mr. Gladstone, more vociferous than ever, pursued his eloquent path towards disaster, resigned, withdrew, dissolved, and led his embarrassed legions to the great Liberal defeat of 1874.

Prime Minister once more, Disraeli kissed his sovereign's hand, and tasted power for the first time at sixty-nine. For six exhausting years he reigned; and his Muse veiled her face, while red boxes, gout, and asthma hunted him from Downing Street to Balmoral, to the Treasury Bench, and finally into the House of Lords. The unfinished novel waited, whilst he made a *coup* in *Sidonia's* best manner with the Suez Canal shares, crowned his Queen Empress of India after a reverie from *Tancred*, and sipped the authentic nectar of diplomacy at the Congress of Berlin. Cyprus, a slightly inadequate jewel, was added to his sovereign's crown; the Sikhs came to Malta, the cheering crowds to Charing Cross. But Peace with Honour, even with the Garter, was a poor

substitute for all that he had lost. Lonely and ailing now, someone heard him murmur among the fanfares of his triumph, "Power! it has come to me too late. There were days when, on waking, I felt I could move dynasties and governments; but that has passed away." Besides, the charm was failing. For the unwearied Gladstone ingeminated woe before roaring audiences in Midlothian; and the inconstant public yielded with increasing reluctance to the slightly enigmatic attractions of "*Imperium et Libertas*" and a "scientific frontier." Indeed, an Afghan War seemed a distasteful price to pay for these somewhat problematic boons; and in Zululand the meagre laurels of Rorke's Drift had scarcely veiled the dark memory of Isandhlwana. The sands ran out in 1880, when Mr. Gladstone was swept back to office on a spate of eloquence, his exasperated sovereign wringing her hands and presenting the retiring Premier with her statuette in bronze, together with two Highland figures, and a plaster group of John Brown, a pony, and a dog.

These trophies followed him to Hughenden, where he sat writing notes to Lady Bradford about "the eremite, who hears nothing, and is absorbed in his own thoughts," watching his peacocks and waiting for warm weather. Then he remembered something in his study and, a defeated statesman of seventy-five, sat down to his unfinished novel. It charmed him out of the distasteful scene around him where Mr. Gladstone, installed in power, was locked in a preposterous conflict with the egregious Bradlaugh, or a hollow eye revisiting the House of Commons could see only "Mr. Chamberlain who looked, and spoke, like a cheesemonger, and the other new lights: Mundella, who looked like an old goat on Mount Haemus, and other dreadful beings." It charmed him back into the past, where Whig hostesses shook their ringlets in the candlelight of 1827, and one might meet the Duke on Charles Arbuthnot's arm in St. James's Street. He breathed once more the air of Lord Liverpool's stroke and Mr. Canning's fatal chill; and as he breathed it, carriages rolled up, and doors swung open, and he saw them all





gay *potpourri* was strongly flavoured with politics; and a full commentary on *Endymion* would make a passable history of England from 1827 to 1875. But the main charm of it lies in the author's evocation of forgotten elegances, though the social phantasmagoria is sometimes a little wild. For the wraith of Lady Cowper appears as wife to a distorted shadow of Lord Hertford, and the heroine is married in quick succession to Lord Palmerston and Napoleon III.

A key to *Endymion* resembles one of those crowded groups that wear numbered ovals instead of faces and provide purchasers of large historical engravings with innocent amusement. For the book was a *bal masqué* of the great world from Navarino to the Crimea. One may detect Louis Napoleon and Queen Hortense behind the masks of *Florestan* and *Agrippina*, a memory of Persigny's scowl in the slightly truculent *St. Angelo*, and Bismarck in middle life with the wasp waist, broad shoulders, and belief in "blood and iron" of *Ferroll*. *Baron Sergius* may contain a faint echo of Metternich, and perhaps the omniscience of *King Luitbrand*—"they say he is the wisest of men"—whispers the last enchantments of King Louis Philippe, who had once fascinated the author. The English scene was crowded with familiar figures. Many appeared in their own names; but more were thinly veiled, and some suffered a slight distortion in the process. Thus *Berengaria Montfort*, married to a softened version of Lord Hertford who had already inspired the author with his *Lord Monmouth* in an earlier book, was a charming blend of Lady Palmerston with Lady Bradford's aptitude for consoling lonely statesmen with "little runnings up to Montfort House or Hill Street," and Lady Normanby's reluctance to resign in the Bedchamber crisis, to which conjecture has even added a touch or so from Mrs. Norton. Her Tory rival, *Zenobia*, was a straightforward sketch of Lady Jersey. But the Radical, *Job Thornberry*, was a still queerer mixture, since elements of William Cobbett and Richard Cobden are readily discernible in his composition. George Smythe, the hero of Young England, is handled a

little tartly as *Waldershare*, although the author almost makes amends by marrying him to a Rothschild and giving him two perfect Disraelian lines to speak :

“ ‘ As for that,’ said *Waldershare*, ‘ sensible men are all of the same religion.’ ”

“ ‘ And pray what is that ? ’ inquired the prince.

“ ‘ Sensible men never tell.’ ”

*Nigel Penruddock* is an unmistakable tribute to Cardinal Manning, and the more shadowy *Sidney Wilton* may render the Peelite rectitude of Sidney Herbert. Even *Endymion* himself owed something to the youthful Dilke. A grateful guest repaid the Rothschilds for long years of friendship by providing *Mr. Neuchatel* with an authentic Swiss ancestry and transporting *Gunnersbury* to HAINAULT HOUSE ; and still older scores were settled in the portrait of Thackeray as *St. Barbe*, who aspires to every social height and watches with an envious eye the sales of his great rival, *Gushy*. There is something a shade distasteful in the spectacle of an aged author indulging in persistent and malicious caricature of a dead parodist. But perhaps the mockery of *Codlingsby* had stung *D. Shrewsbury, Esq.*, more than the mocker suspected ; and seventeen years after his death Thackeray was dragged to the gibbet by his indignant victim.

Other masks abounded in the throng. Edward Bulwer Lytton and Henry Lytton Bulwer were more gently handled as the two brothers *Mr. Bertie Tremaine* and *Mr. Tremaine Bertie* ; and *Mr. Vigo* was a highly favourable picture of Hudson, the Railway King, with slight additions from Poole the tailor. But perhaps the most successful portrait was *Lord Roehampton*, the perpetual Foreign Secretary—“ all the ladies admire him, and he admires all the ladies.” That figure of an Irish peer, who had “ served his apprenticeship under Perceval and Liverpool, and changed his party just in time to become a member of the Cabinet of 1831,” is unmistakable ; and the hand that wrote endless despatches in his library, the voice that murmured that the greatest

tragedy of all was "to have the feelings of youth and the frame of age" was Palmerston's. Disraeli's portrait is painted with an admiring hand; the gallantry, the racing-stable, and the red boxes are lovingly rendered. Indeed, his praises have an almost envious ring. "That statesman seemed never better than when the gale ran high," is an odd tribute from an Opposition leader. But the whole tone of *Endymion* is distinctly Whiggish; and Disraeli was always drawn to Palmerston. He had made mysterious (and invariably unsuccessful) overtures; his own statesmanship in 1878 was full of Palmerstonian echoes; and Disraeli's voice speaks through the mouth of *Lady Montfort*—"Look to Lord Roehampton; he is the man. He does not care a rush whether the revenue increases or declines. He is thinking of real politics; foreign affairs; maintaining our power in Europe."

But *Endymion* owes its charm less to the portrait-gallery than to the social panorama. The old man at Hughenden lived in his memories, and the scenes rose before him—London in 1835, with more coffee-houses, fewer clubs, and two theatres; the great world, "composed of elements more refined though far less various," assembled nightly at Almack's; the drive to Epsom, still "the Carnival of England"; and the heraldic charade of the Eglinton Tournament. He watched it all again, from Canning's death to the ignoble exit of Lord Aberdeen in the Crimean War, as *Endymion* pursued his graceful way through scenes that were moonlit with memory. But even his memories were less remarkable than his high spirits. For the defeated leader, lonely and ill in his little study, sent up flash after flash of his amazing wit to burst in verbal stars. His phrases were never more lavish or more pointed; and the gaiety which could write at seventy-five that "an insular country subject to fogs, and with a powerful middle class, requires grave statesmen" deserves commemoration. Small wonder that Archbishop Tait read him with grave misgivings. But the world applauded; even the reviewers melted. Yet it

seemed for a time as though Mr. Longman's price had been a shade excessive ; and the author, with an abnegation rare among authors, offered his publisher a large refund. The publisher, with qualities still less frequent among publishers, declined the offer—and was rewarded by the prompt success of a popular edition.

That winter, as he fought his ailments, London saw him totter about town, the mummy of a *beau*. He was pre-eminent in Tory councils ; and once (drugs aiding him) the House of Lords was told by a familiar voice that “ the key of India is in London.” But his pen still moved across the paper, and a new novel claimed him. This piece, which never passed the first paragraph of its tenth chapter, was left without a title. But his invariable practice was to name his books after their central figure ; and it was plainly to have been a study of the mirthless *Falconet's* career in public life. The scene was not unfamiliar, since *Lothair* and members of his circle flit across the stage. The usual *bal masqué* of Victorian notables reopened briskly. *Lady Bertram*, the universal hostess with her parties and her lord and his red boxes, was one more memory of Lady Palmerston ; the Rothschilds reappear, this time as Germans dignified by philosophic tastes ; and who can say that Jowett's shadow was altogether absent from the Head of an Oxford House who “ was one of those distinguished divines who do not believe in divinity,” and proclaimed “ that things, though entirely profane, were yet essentially sacred ” ? But the remaining characters were more shadowy—a Cingalese, destined to be the vehicle of Buddhist reflections on the futility of European thought, and a mysterious Unknown with slight symptoms of Nihilism.

The central figure, though, was *Falconet*, the solemn cadet of a commercial house, whom his unkind creator endowed with an unexampled flow of language, no sense of humour, and an unshakeable belief in his divine mission. Dislike of Gladstone had been growing on him, and recipients of his later correspondence learned to recognise that stately figure

as "the A.V."—in genial abbreviation of "the Arch Villain." He even occurs as "the Impetuous Hypocrite"; and there can be little doubt that *Falconet* was to have been a delightfully malicious study of his triumphant rival. Nor is it by coincidence that *Joseph Toplady Falconet* was decorated by a sardonic author with two names, of which one had been borne by the writer of "Rock of Ages," and the other by Joseph Surface. It was his final repartee.

### III

#### MR. DISRAELI, POET

It will amuse the leisure of posterity (if we cannot live in the Eighteenth Century, let us at least try to write like it) to observe under glass, among the odder specimens of our age, the modern collector. His tastes have varied through the long course of history. So long as he confined himself to such harmless rarities as stuffed crocodiles and two-headed lambs, he remained a figure of no particular significance, without ambitions, and useful only to sorcerers engaged in furnishing their studios. But when his range lengthened and his repertory came gradually to include the whole catalogue of tangible objects, he attained a higher dignity, and he will probably be noticed by an observant posterity as one of the leading features of our time.

It is an odd, industrious little figure that goes about, in his favourite phrase, picking things up. Other ages have thrown things away; and their dust-heaps, at Tell-el-Amarna and Oxyrhynchus, are an impressive memorial, almost a mirror of their life. But the collector, scavenging indomitably in the wake of our civilisation, will leave nothing whatever for posterity to find. When we perish, his collections will perish with us; and there will be nothing left over to remember us by—not even our discarded door-knobs or our broken snuff-boxes or the gay, pictorial lids of our bloater-paste. For they are all collected by someone; our refuse-heaps will yield nothing to the excavator but dust and ashes, and even our ashes are endangered by the ingenuities of fuel experts.

If you enumerate the collector's fancies, you will find that he has opened out to include the whole field of human phenomena. Sometimes he is straightforward enough,

when he abandons himself to an honest pursuit of good art and sound furniture. There is nothing morbid about a taste for Sheraton or the simpler appetite for Rembrandts which impels cultured peach-packers to raise the price of tinned fruit in order to pay their debts to art-dealers. But more often (there is probably an unpleasant explanation which any psycho-analyst could conceal behind his detestable terminology) the collector's fancy seems to run a crooked course. There is something faintly perverted about many of his preferences. You will find him in the dark corners of bookshops buying books for their misprints. He has been seen admiring prints because of some error that remained uncorrected on the plate. The fatal lure of rarity obscures for the collector the facile charms of perfection. It is enough for him (one is back again in the era of the two-headed lamb) that the specimen is unique.

Yet there is one field of rarity that remains singularly unexplored by the collector. It happens from time to time that a man who has attained distinction in one field of achievement exercises himself in another. These exercises are normally devoid of all distinction except their author's name. But one would have expected, by all the canons of connoisseurship, that they would practise a strange fascination upon the collector. "Rafael made a century of sonnets." You would think that Mr. Huntington would devastate the dollar exchange by the price paid at auction for this experiment in poetry by a master of painting. "Dante once prepared to paint an angel." The preparations were probably disastrous. But one can almost picture the scene at Christie's as the thousands leap into ten thousands and the auctioneer holds his breath, whilst eager commission-agents, in emulation of Mr. Canning, call a New World into being to redress the balances of the Old.

There is a morbid attraction about these experiments. One has felt it, to some extent, over the French verses of Frederick the Great. They are not good verses; but then Frederick was not a good king. Yet at least he was a king;

and one finds in the rather halting lullaby of his interminable Alexandrines a strange, incommunicable thrill. It comes from a sudden realisation that the lips which first muttered them were the thin lips of the King of Prussia, that the eye which was searching the rococo ceiling for inspiration (which never, never came) was the eye which faced Europe so steadily through seven years of war. The decorous Muse of the Eighteenth Century walks more than a little stiffly through those innumerable Odes to Glory, to Prince Henry of Prussia, to War, to the Margravine of Baireuth, and to most of the primary virtues. Perhaps the Muse, poor lady, was aware that her partner in the dance was a crowned head.

Yet there is a dreadful fascination about such rarities. Napoleon once began to write a novel: it was called *Lord Essex*, and one can imagine the collectors of three continents elbowing one another in a wild attempt to bid for the tepid balderdash, because it was made by a man who could win battles. Something of the same attraction clings to the sparse writings of British statesmen, those stern, illiterate figures whose heavy hands make empires and Poets Laureate. A few have written prose; but hardly one of them since Mr. Canning, has struck the lyre. Yet there was a Prime Minister once who wrote a tragedy in verse. It opens with an Advertisement which must win the sympathy of all historians: "As there is no historical authority for the events of the celebrated Ballad on which this Tragedy is founded, I have fixed upon the thirteenth century for the period of their occurrence." Many statesmen have been uncertain about their chronology. But can it be doubted that this preliminary tucket (how one begins to catch the tone of the period) was sounded by an author who signed himself A and concealed behind that mysterious fragment of a dead language the personality of Mr. Disraeli?

He was writing with every possible advantage. He was beginning (it was the year 1838) to get on in the world. He was in love. He was staying at a large country house.





1ST COUR.

The Prince was there ?

2ND COUR.

Most royally . . .

One is half afraid, as each line draws to its perfect close, that the poet will fail to keep it up. But with the astonishing energy which was to survive a lifetime spent in Opposition he maintains the splendid standard set in his opening passage. There are bold strokes of local colour, such as

Yet on the Prado's walk came smiling by  
The Bishop of Ossuna . . .

or the vivid ejaculation of a Spanish Friar :

For the love of St. Jago, señors ; for the love of St. Jago !

But the poet is at his happiest when he is most Shakespearian, even though he candidly confessed to his lady that he saw " no use in writing tragedies unless they be as fine as Shakespeare's." He revels in royal ladies who call a forward Page " Rare Imp " ; his Bravi reflect credit on their schoolmasters with such admirable reminiscences of their education as, " It was full of meat as an egg " ; and the spirit of blank verse so dominates the drama that its last broken line is finished for him by the stage directions :

Go tell him, sirs, the Count Alarcos lived  
To find a hell on earth ; yet thus he sought  
A deeper and a darker. [Falls.

THE END.

Yet one fears that the passages which chilled Mr. Macready's enthusiasm were of the simpler sort :

There was a sort of scene to-day at Court ;  
The Princess fainted—we were all dismissed  
Somewhat abruptly . . .

During the labours of composition Mr. Disraeli had discovered that, of all forms of literature, tragedy " requires

the utmost skill and practice and profound composition. If mine ever appear, it shall be a masterpiece." What appeared was *Count Alarcos* ; and there are two wonderful things about it. The first is that the author, if he is to be believed, burned more of it than he printed ; and the second is that in the year 1868 a version of it ran for five weeks at Astley's " with the loudest demonstrations of applause from delighted audiences." One feels that sometimes we may love our Prime Ministers too well.

## BONNET AND SHAWL

*Wives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.*

## JANE WELSH CARLYLE

### *Terse Verse*

*being a contribution to Scottish Anthology*

*Hail ye hills and heaths of Ecclefechan !  
Hail ye banks and braes of Craigenputtock !  
T. Carlyle was born in Ecclefechan,  
Jane his wife was born in Craigenputtock.  
She, a pearl where eye detect no speck can,  
He, ordained to close with and cross-buttock  
Cant, the giant—these, O Ecclefechan,  
These your glories be, O Craigenputtock !*

BROWNING

*(Impromptu written for Tennyson).*

### I

THE road from Templand to Biggar and on to Edinburgh is not of unusual beauty. Even a solitary postchaise rolling along it late one autumn afternoon in 1826 could hardly make it beautiful, though perhaps it seemed so to the pair inside. Yet even that is doubtful, though they had just been married ; since the bridegroom, dissuaded with some effort from the ghastly, though inexpensive, project of conveying his bride by stage-coach and the no less embarrassing (if more generous) design of taking a younger brother part of the way with them, had stipulated with her that she should let him “ by the road, as occasion serves, *smoke three cigars* without criticism or reluctance, as things essential to my perfect contentment.” For, as a later singer notes,

a woman is only a woman, but a good  
cigar is a Smoke.

Perhaps he smoked them, though biography (elsewhere so prodigal of information as to his domestic habits) is silent

on the point. Perhaps the wedding chaise drew up at some convenient point, and a gaunt form emerged to inhale contentment by the roadside on his wedding-day. At any rate, he made the stipulation ; and the mood which it reveals was scarcely that of honeymoon. Small wonder that her heart misgave a little when she saw her lover " fly from my caresses to—smoke tobacco, or speak of me as a new *circumstance* of your lot," and that he called her final letter before marriage " The Last Speech and *marrying* words of that unfortunate young woman Jane Baillie Welsh." Unfortunate indeed.

## 2

The courtship had been odd : it was bound to be. For Miss Welsh was, in the noblest sense, a lady. Indeed, she was a lady in the ignobler sense as well ; since her father was a doctor, and Welshes in their more boastful moments alluded to John Knox as an ancestor. Her mother's line aspired to even greater heights, since it claimed descent from Wallace. Besides, she did no housework, was a kind of heiress, and wrote verse. They called her the flower of Haddington. So Miss Welsh was, beyond all doubt, a lady. But Carlyle was, as the Duke of Wellington said of Napoleon, " emphatically *not* a gentleman." Efforts to trace his descent from a brother of the murdered Duncan were received with wild derision by this prickly flower of Annandale, who vastly preferred to feel his roots in the village street of Ecclefechan. In fine, he was a peasant.

But he was an unusual peasant. All the Carlyles were rather unusual, from their alarming father with his contempt for conversation and " his tongue-paralysing cold indifferent 'Hah' " to the tiny Jean dictating rhymed epistles before she had even learnt to write. They were united, though. Perhaps a sense of their oddity served to unite them ; and the most articulate of the family could write that " we Carlyles are a clannish people because we have all something original in our formation, and find there-

fore less than common sympathy with others ; so that we are constrained, as it were, to draw to one another, and to seek that friendship in our own blood which we do not find so readily elsewhere." Not that he nestled passively in any feather-bed of family affection. For he was not, was very far indeed from being, a clinging type. Even a mother's pride confessed that he was " gey ill to deal wi' " ; and the world confirmed her. But that was just the Carlyle in him. They could all be Carlyles together in Annandale ; and his nature always found its place in the cottage circle, where the sons stumbled in from work to find their father reading sermons and a small sister sewing samplers. He was at home there. All his life, indeed, he was never very far from Annandale. It followed him to Chelsea and even into the transcendental, lending a strong Dumfriesshire accent to his communings with the eternal verities. For he remained, as he began, a peasant.

He was a Scottish peasant, though ; and in consequence his education left nothing to be desired. For a village boy, who was prepared to walk the hundred miles or so to Edinburgh, might go to college. There he could see the world and read the classics, finding Homer grand and Horace light-minded, in the intervals of waiting for the Ecclefechan carrier to bring fresh supplies of oatmeal and clean shirts from home. He had taught school as well and read Goethe in a comfortable ditch outside the farm, to say nothing of a recurring itch for literary fame—" Heaven knows that ever since I have been able to form a wish, the wish of being known has been the foremost. Oh Fortune ! . . . grant me that, with a heart of independence unyielding to thy favours and unbending to thy frowns, I may attain to literary fame." The wish was granted ; but not yet, though the Muses called already with the slightly chilling utterance of Dr. Brewster inviting him to write stray articles for his *Encyclopædia*. He was to be a minister, of course, and gratify the village parents. But the Kirk's call was faint ; and he turned school-teacher instead, with a

vague inclination to the law. It would be almost as gratifying to Annandale if they could make a fine lawyer of him. So the law prevailed; and he was soon back in Edinburgh with ninety pounds, fortified by anxious warnings from his family against that "unwholesome city . . . and its selfish and unfeeling inhabitants." Behind him Annandale watched eagerly; and, strong in their confidence, he wrestled with the intricacies of Scottish jurisprudence, philosophic doubts, and an inadequate digestion, pausing in the struggle to send home a new hat for Sandy or a bonnet for his mother and supporting his first steps in the new profession by taking private pupils in mathematics.

He had a friend as well, who had taught school with him. Like Carlyle, the handsome Irving was from Dumfriesshire; and when fate took them to Kirkcaldy, the two exiles from Annandale marooned in Fife drew naturally together. The friendship lasted; and in his Edinburgh days they tramped the moors, wrote endless letters, and discussed the universe at length, until one summer afternoon in 1821 Irving took his melancholy young friend to pay a call in Haddington. They were to call on Mrs. Welsh, and Miss Welsh was expected to be at home as well. She liked to be at home to gentlemen. Did she not crowd into a brief career consuming, but still briefer, passions for the Artillery Boy, an artist with an amethyst ring, George Rennie, Dugald G., "a handsome fascinating Colonel of the Guards who held an umbrella over me for four-and-twenty hours," a farmer's son from somewhere near, and the obliging doctor who played shuttlecock, to say nothing of a captain in the Lancers, her second cousin from Leeds, and an Englishman afflicted with a stammer? A later catalogue, assuming almost Homeric proportions, even includes the shadowy names of Robert MacTurk, James Aitken, James Baird, and Robby Angus. For if Jane's reckoning was correct, Penelope had not more suitors. The bright brunette had once importuned her father for permission "to learn Latin like a boy." But in spite of Latin, Jane, one fears, was still quite recognisably a girl.



So she was sure to be at home when Mr. Irving brought his friend. For callers in Haddington were an event. Besides, Mr. Irving had been her particular friend, had even tutored her with slightly more than a tutorial zeal. True, at the moment George Rennie appeared to be the ruling star in her firmament. But Mr. Irving managed to combinè in a most elegant degree the ardent and the clerical. It was a little late when they arrived—"a red, dusky evening, the sky hanging huge and high, but dim as with dust or drought over Irving and me." Carlyle approached the encounter without undue exhilaration. He had walked sixteen miles ; besides, Irving had introduced him to young ladies before. There had been one in Fife—a blonde Canadian with a stern aunt from Aberdeen, who fluttered into his life one afternoon in Irving's room and fluttered out again, promising to be a sister to him, with the excellent advice that he should "*cultivate the milder dispositions of your heart, subdue the more extravagant visions of the brain. . . . Remove the awful distance between you and ordinary men, by kind and gentle manners ; deal mildly with their inferiority, and be convinced they will respect you as much and like you more.*" (Was ever Cheyne Row more vividly foreseen ?) That had been Irving's introduction. He seemed to have a fancy for presenting his slightly unattractive friend to delicious young ladies. It could do no harm ; and (who knows ?) it might give pleasure. He was particularly anxious to please Miss Welsh. Something, perhaps, remained from his tutorial ardours ; and they all sat down to tea—the two pedestrians, Jane and her mother, a gentleman or so, and Miss Augusta. They drank tea and talked ; Carlyle, in spite of indigestion, talked rather well ; and afterwards, when they were safely back at the George Inn, Irving gently rallied his companion on the subject of the ladies. What would he take to marry Miss Augusta, now ? Carlyle, whose badinage was apt to be a little massive, responded : "Not for an entire and perfect chrysolite the size of this terraqueous globe." And what, his friend persisted, would he take to marry Miss Jeannie ?

"Hah," he replied, inspired by this agreeable alternative to less geological repartee, "I should not be so hard to deal with there, I should imagine." But hard enough for Jeannie; and, perhaps, a little hard for Irving, too.

So the two had met. They met again in the next day or so, when there was talk of Jane's literary aspirations. She ached to serve the Muses; and that high design appeared to call for more tutorial assistance. This time, as Mr. Irving was deep in his clerical career, it might be rendered by Carlyle; and he was soon prescribing a light course of Hume and Robertson, with Tasso and Madame de Staël as relaxations. The bibliography which she received from him after their first meeting was slightly illumined by a coy reference to "the Lady Jane" and "those few Elysian hours we spent together lately." He even took leave of his fair correspondent in the gay obscurity of a romantic language—"Addio Donna mia cara!" This was swift going. But Jane was singularly unresponsive and returned his books with barely courteous orthography "To Mr. Carslile, with Miss Welsh's compliments and very best thanks." To be snubbed is sad; but to be misspelt and snubbed is overwhelming. Her dejected tutor, who had begun the correspondence hopefully enough with his "dear Friend," reverted hastily to his "dear Madam," quoted a line of Virgil, and explained the correct spelling of his name. But his incorrigible pupil, still haunted by her uneasy sense of a silent s lurking somewhere, persisted in her error and communicated once again with "Mr. Carslile." The much-enduring man grew almost plaintive, and she learned her lesson. A few months later he learned his, after "dear Madam" had warmed to "dear Friend" again and the young lady, finding her new tutor quite as embarrassing as her old one (and not half as handsome), firmly warned him that "I dislike as much as my Mother disapproves your somewhat too ardent expressions of Friendship towards me; and that if you cannot write to me as to a man who feels a deep interest in your welfare, who admires your talents,

respects your virtues, and for the sake of these has often—perhaps too often—overlooked your faults ; if you cannot write to me as if—as if you were married, you need never waste ink or paper on me more.” More followed in Jane’s sternest strain—the man positively seemed to fancy she had fallen in love with him and proposed to reward his literary labours with her self ; other Misses might fall in love and marry, but never Jane ; his intended visit, if her inclinations were to be consulted, would be most distasteful as giving rise to impertinent conjectures and leading ill-natured Haddington to tattle about its flower. She was extremely angry, and one can almost hear her foot stamp at the end of each little sentence. But in a quieter mood she added that she was prepared, like the blonde Canadian, to be a sister to him. Sadly enlightened, he sought refuge in Schiller and, back at “ dear Madam ” once again, advised the composition of a tragedy on Boadicea. What rejected suitor ever planned a more awful vengeance ?

Their correspondence flowed more evenly along this safely literary channel, Carlyle prescribing hard with occasional snatches of home-made verse, and Jane living in a delicious whirl of ancient history, Italian, and her “ dear, dear German.” She even found time to send him notes upon her callers, with the less scholastic information that she had been putting feathers into a hat. He was a habit with her now ; and her “ dear Sir ” was favoured with narratives of other suitors’ fates, her journey to the Highlands (with notes on stray admirers), her daily habits, hours of tea-drinking and attention to the reticule, and the purely secular intelligence that “ by cutting my hair in a new fashion and *sewing my waists to my skirts*, . . . I have so expedited the process of dressing that it costs me on no occasion above ten minutes.” Slightly encouraged, he launched the hopeful project of collaboration with her in a highly dishevelled novel, in which a disconsolate philosopher and a worldly lady were to die of love for one another.

It was nearly two years since the first afternoon at Had-

dington. She still remembered it and wrote of the occasion now with almost lingering reminiscence. He had reminded her, it seems, of her lost father, although she had not seemed to notice the resemblance at the time. But now she spelt his name correctly ; " dear Sir " had vanished with " dear Madam " ; and Carlyle was " dear Friend " to Jane, as she to him. News of his literary projects fired her : if she could not be a Muse herself (and Schiller was really very difficult to translate), she might yet be the nymph Egeria. So the letters travelled happily between Edinburgh and Haddington. They were at ease with one another ; and when she wrote to tell him how success in London was making Irving a shade grotesque, he received the news quite cosily—" What a wicked creature you are to make me laugh so at poor Irving." Here was a new Carlyle—and, perhaps, a new Jane also.

He had climbed now to " dear Jane " without a protest ; he could pour out his plans to her, while she admiringly received them ; and in an ecstasy of good advice he sketched a placid future for her, in which she was to write innumerable essays (especially one on Friendship) in the society of her mother and " the good people round you," with himself for perpetual tutor. Marriage was almost artfully excluded from this agreeable perspective ; and without a shade of irony he even undertook to be a brother to her. Such abnegation was rewarded. For her very next letter invited him to Haddington—" and come when you like, Dear." Incalculable Jane.

Now they looked comfortably back together at poor dear Irving " in a very foamy state." Delightful vistas of highly improving reading stretched endlessly before them ; there were thoughts of *Tales from the German, translated and selected by Jane Baillie Welsh* in octavo, with a preface or so by her devoted tutor. Meanwhile he thoughtfully advised her how to repel unsuitable admirers. Indeed, his anxiety to keep her single was positively touching. He portrayed the emptiness of married life in fashionable circles ; he

praised her genius ; he pointed to the heights. Jane stood beside him and peered up at them a little doubtfully. But if the steep ascent would overtax her powers, she still might watch another scale Parnassus. For the nymph Egeria was stirring in her ; and this hopeful mood prompted an odd confession of her admiration—" When shall a world know your worth as I do ? . . . a haughty genius . . . giant power . . . I *will* wish you *famous*." Such letters, even when addressed to tutors, lead to misunderstanding ; and Carlyle, flushed with the simultaneous news of Irving safely marrying somewhere off in Fife, misunderstood. One tutor safely wed, the other leapt to the assault. " Thank God," he cried by return of post, " it is not a dream : Jane loves me ! she loves me ! and I swear by the Immortal Powers that she shall yet be mine, as I am hers, thro' life and death." The man was really most provoking—he had misunderstood again. Of course she loved him (the exasperating girl positively repeated it), but only as a sister—" your Friend I will be, your truest most devoted Friend, while I breathe the breath of life ; but not your Wife ! " Could anything be plainer ? The Canadian blonde, he would recall, had said the same. This time Carlyle received the lesson meekly—" You love me as a sister and will not wed ; I love you in all possible senses of the word, and will not wed, any more than you. . . . So long as you have charity to hear me . . . I will speak and listen ; when you tire of this, when you marry, or cast me off in any of the thousand ways that fortune is ever offering, I shall of course cease to correspond with you, I shall cease to love Mrs. —, but not Jane Welsh ; the image she will have left on my mind I shall always love. . . ." So there he was, a little touching and her tutor once again.

The age of reason was resumed. Once more the nymph Egeria could enjoy the confidence of a real man of letters and fan (by correspondence) his heated brow, whilst he bent over his lives of German poets and his own translation of *William Meister*, which wrestled with the dark powers of



to be the polar star of my being—one warm-hearted, high-minded, *dearest* Friend, whose sublime genius would shed an ennobling grace on all around him; whose graceful and splendid qualities would inspire a love that should be the heart and soul of my life!" The reference was pointed. For the dawn of jealousy had made her strangely explicit; and, dancing with impatience, she waited for his next. It came, with his customary avowals and the unappetising project that she should retire with him to Annandale and watch him translating Schiller. Sure of him once more, she took refuge in the enigmatic. She even ventured on a joke, hinting that if farming land was what he required, her farm at Craigenputtock might be convenient. Carlyle was not a man to joke with and responded promptly with a grim proposal of marriage, to be followed by life together at Craigenputtock. Thus she would secure at once a tenant and a husband. The hounds were on her now; but, wearied by the long pursuit, Jane made less effort than usual to escape; she was sensible instead—of course she loved him, had told him so a hundred times; but there was love *and* love; and hers for him was no overwhelming passion; it was "a love which *influences*, does not *make* the destiny of a life"; besides, he was without a certain livelihood, could not maintain her in the station in which . . . ; let him only secure "a modest but *settled* income"; then they would talk of married life, though not at Craigenputtock—"I would just as soon think of building myself a nest on the Bass Rock. . . . I would not spend a month at it with an Angel." But she showed one gleam—at all events she would marry no one else. Pursuing still (and far from faint), he reasoned with her. The reasoning was simple. For the settled income, for which she stipulated, could not come until dyspepsia was banished; dyspepsia would stay with him until he had a thorough change; Jane was to be the change. She fenced weaklier now. All that she asked was to see him "earning a certain livelihood, and *exercising* the profession of a gentleman"; she confessed, indeed, that

given a little time, her own feeling for him might improve, might mount in fact from Plato to the altar ; for (she faced it boldly) it was probably her destiny to marry him, " and in a year or so perhaps I shall consider it the only one " ; but the time was not quite yet. So Jane melted, and the hunt was over ; and from that moment she viewed herself as his affianced wife.

Melting Jane was soon a Jane subdued, a Jane admitting " to be *half-engaged* " and writing to her " adorable Mr. Thomas " to confess all (and rather more than all) her former love for Irving. She read his letters now without her mother's supervision ; and their love floated free at last from philosophical entanglements. Now it all ran upon their future—every page covered brought him nearer to his reward, and, perhaps, by this time twelvemonth . . . . Even her mother seemed to smile upon the prospect. Not that the prospect was entirely placid. Did he not announce with ominous directness that " the moment I am master of a house, the first use I turn it to will be to slam the door of it on the face of nauseous intrusions " ? Her heart misgave a little. It misgave, perhaps, a little more when on the subject of an impracticable scheme of life *à trois* with Mrs. Welsh he announced with the full dignity of underlining that "*The man should bear rule in the house and not the woman.*" That the sentiment was a translation from the German made it no better ; and he made it worse by a full commentary—" I must not and I cannot live in a house of which I am not head. I should be miserable myself, and make all about me miserable. Think not, Darling, that this comes from an imperious temper ; that I shall be a harsh and tyrannical Husband to thee. God forbid ! But it is the nature of a man that if he be controlled by anything but his own reason, he feels himself degraded, and incited, be it justly or not, to rebellion and discord. It is the nature of a woman again (for she is essentially *passive* not *active*) to cling to the man for support and direction ; to comply with his humours, and feel pleasure in doing so, simply because



they are his ; to reverence while she loves him, to conquer him not by her force but by her weakness, and perhaps (the cunning gypsy !) after all to command him by obeying him. . . . My own four walls ! ” Here was the whole philosophy of Cheyne Row, translating into finer terms the thought of every peasant in Annandale and set almost menacingly in front of her.

In spite of all she still went forward, and—indomitable Jane—informed him gaily that they were soon to be the happiest pair in Annandale. Happy, perhaps. But in Annandale, beyond a doubt. For from now on her life was all lived in a spiritual Annandale, where woman (the cunning gypsy !) might propose, but man disposed. So eager Jane and eager Thomas watched the summer weeks of 1826 go by, until one afternoon the wedding chaise rolled towards Biggar by the road from Templand, which is not of unusual beauty.

## 3

The chaise rolled on to Edinburgh, rolled on a few years later as far as Craigenputtock, where poor Jane, who had vowed she would not spend a month there with an angel, spent six long years with her husband and the manuscript of *Sartor*. It rolled on again one summer morning, taking a maid, Jane, Thomas, and a canary across the London squares. This time it was a hackney coach, loaded with luggage to the roof and further ; and it set them down before a newly-painted door in Chelsea. But even Annandale was never very far from Cheyne Row. For here was the house that he had dreamed of, whose door could be slammed on the face of nauseous intrusions ; and the man, according to his German text, bore undisputed rule. His own four walls enclosed them, where Jane was to cling to him and enjoy complying with his humours, simply because they were his. (His contribution to the household was, it seemed, to be the humours ; and how richly he fulfilled the promise.) Yet Jane could not complain. Had he not

sketched the prospect to her in forbidding detail? She had made her bargain, and for forty years she gallantly fulfilled it, while *The French Revolution*, *Heroes*, *Past and Present*, *Cromwell*, and *Frederick* dragged their agonising length across the silent room upstairs. It was his dream fulfilled. The nymph Egeria, perhaps, was satisfied as well. For she could watch him scale Parnassus, lived with each project, heard each chapter read as it was wrung from him. So the nymph saw her dream fulfilled. But Jane was not all Egeria. George Rennie, Robert MacTurk, James Baird, and Bobby Angus had known that. Even Carlyle, perhaps, suspected it that afternoon in Haddington, when Irving introduced him and Mrs. Welsh poured out the tea. But if he ever knew, he had forgotten; and to her favoured mortal she was just Egeria, residing (for the royal convenience) in King Numa's palace. Nymphs, it is evident, should never leave their groves: at any rate, this nymph discovered that life in her favourite's palace could be more arduous. Egeria's part was more exacting than poor Jane had ever dreamed. Better, perhaps, a lonely flower in Haddington than an overburdened wife (even with the rôle of cunning gypsy) in Cheyne Row.

The chaise rolled on (it was a private carriage now), and Jane sat quietly inside. It drove from Marble Arch to Stanhope Gate, along the Serpentine, and round again to Hyde Park Corner. Carlyle was far away in Scotland for his triumphal installation as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. He was an acknowledged sage, the crowned oracle of his day, like all the other sages he had once prescribed to her. Other tutors prescribed his oracles to other Janes; and Jane, an ageing woman now, could count his honours as she sat quietly inside the brougham. The London trees went past the carriage-windows, and Jane sat on. At Hyde Park Corner the coachman pulled up for orders, got none, asked a passing stranger to look inside, and drove hurriedly to St. George's Hospital. Her heart had stopped.

## CATHERINE GLADSTONE

ANN [*looking at him with fond pride and caressing his arm*] : *Never mind her, dear. Go on talking.*

MAN AND SUPERMAN.

THE air of 1839 was heavy with impending nuptials. In the bright dawn of a new reign matrimony swept over England like a genial epidemic, and the land was loud with banns. For the Queen's hand was asked and given ; and, inspired by this event, a highly representative selection of her subjects moved with an almost simultaneous impulse to the altar. Disraeli and his Mary Anne, Victoria and her Albert, even Lord Palmerston and his delicious Emily prepared for felicity that season. Wedding-bells were universal, and discreet Victorian *amorini* clustered in unseen jubilation above the happy couples. But the cloud of felicity hung nowhere lower or more richly charged than over Hawarden, where rumour positively announced a double wedding. At the Castle two maidens drooped and two young gentlemen paced the grounds together. The day broke at last, and one bridegroom—the more aquiline of the two—“ rose in good time and read the Psalms.” The organ pealed ; the Dean pronounced the blessing ; bands thumped outside ; the village children scattered flowers, and cottagers performed obeisances in all directions. For the tale of weddings was complete. The Queen betrothed, Lord Palmerston proposing marriage, Disraeli kneeling with Mrs. Wyndham Lewis at St. George's, Hanover Square, were a mere prelude. Now Mr. Gladstone had received his bride ; and the Victorian age was ready to begin.

### I

The joyful air had a less joyful overture. For courtship, in Mr. Gladstone's hands, became an almost thoughtful

mode. The lovers met abroad. They had met before, but not as lovers—once at a dinner-party, where another guest was recalled (after a slightly suspicious interval) to have observed, “Mark that young man! He will one day be Prime Minister of England”; once in the echoing austerity of a Handel Commemoration; and one vacation when he was staying with her brother. He was a young Member of Parliament—Oxford (as someone said) on the surface, but Liverpool below. A priestly appearance was appropriately distinguished by peculiar views upon the Church; and he had positively written a book about them, which lingered in the press whilst he refreshed his classical allusions with a Sicilian holiday. She was the sister of a college friend. They met in Sicily; they met again in the same hotel at Naples, saw sights together, dined a good deal *en famille*, and scaled Vesuvius; and when he left, he entered “this Circean City” in his journal. The allusion, it may be presumed, was rather to the classics than to any enchantress whom he had met there. For Circe was the last title which it would have occurred to Mr. Gladstone to bestow upon Miss Glynne.

They were all in Rome for Christmas; and his reflections took a less pagan turn, as he heard mass with Manning in St. Peter’s or recorded endless Italian sermons in his insatiable diary. But one day he walked with her in Santa Maria Maggiore; and as they looked about them at so much Roman splendour, she was led to compare the meagre equipment of English churches with the ungrudging comfort of English homes. “Do you think,” she asked the dark young man beside her, “we can be justified in indulging ourselves in all these luxuries?” She came, as he did, from a wealthy home. He was a Tory, too; and the answer was, perhaps, a trifle awkward. But the wide-eyed question charmed him; and he recorded it in his all-seeing diary among notes of sermons with the ecstatic comment: “I loved her for this question—how sweet a thing it is to reflect that her heart and will are entirely

in the hands of God. May He in this, as in all things, be with her." For that winter day in Santa Maria Maggiore, she had lit a candle that was to burn between them for sixty years.

His next move was less introspective. For the aspiration breathed in the privacy of his journal worked strongly on him; and Mr. Gladstone (even the skittish Muse of intimate biography attempts no more familiar address) offered marriage. He offered it with every scenic advantage that a romantic mood, combined with a classical education, could suggest. For he proposed by moonlight in the Colosseum. "The theme," as Disraeli wickedly remarked of someone else, "the poet, the speaker"—and (may one add?) the setting—"what a felicitous combination!" But Miss Glynne, sadly negligent of a historic opportunity, was unresponsive. One more classical allusion had fallen flat; and the Colosseum, still conscious of its unenviable place in Christian tradition, made one martyr more. The martyred wooer left for England. But by a laudable precaution he took with him the brother of his fair executioner; and the sister's letters breathed a suspicious interest in "Già" and "Già's" book on Church and State and her meetings with "Già's" great friend, Manning. She even employed this helpful medium to answer "Già's" letters to herself—"I appreciate very much the generous feelings which are expressed in his letter to me. . . . I cannot take Michael Angelo's beautiful sonnet to myself, but the sentiments contained in it are so lofty, it was impossible not to read it without the greatest delight. Please read this yourself to Già, as I particularly want the message to be given exactly." There was a watchful postscript: "Tell me how you get through my message to Già and any rebound. Nothing could express more honourable feelings and taste than the letter he wrote me." Meanwhile the lover was confiding to his journal a dejected sense of his undue precipitation, stupidity, and general unworthiness, or attending committee meetings with undiminished zeal. That year the National

Schools Enquiry claimed him, to say nothing of the committees of the Additional Curates Fund, the Church Commercial School, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and Church Building in the Metropolis, and the more secular affairs of the Carlton Club library and the Oxford and Cambridge Club. He even found time for a perusal of *Nicholas Nickleby*, which he found "very human; it is most happy in touches of natural pathos. No church in the book, and the motives are not those of religion."

But Mr. Gladstone, though suffering from no lack of church, was human, too; and his meetings with Miss Glynne were vigorously resumed in London. They met at every hour and in every part of town—at dinner-time in Berkeley Square, on horseback, even at breakfast with the poet Rogers. His journal still desponded. Even his father became the recipient of his despairs. But one afternoon they all drove down to Fulham for Lady Shelley's garden-party. There, Thames proving more auspicious than Tiber, his desire was granted. For as they walked apart, she yielded and "my Catherine gave me herself." The mood of her surrender left nothing to be desired. She breathed a lofty piety; and in return the happy lover offered, as a *gage d'amour*, four lines of Dante. They even called on the Archbishop, whose official embrace was gratefully recorded by a proud *fiancé*. Then they plunged into a happy whirl of family visits, further complicated by a second engagement in the family. For her sister, after becoming hesitations, had yielded to the entreaties of Lord Lyttelton. She was "much overcome, and hid her face in Catherine's bosom; then they fled away for a little," while Gladstone did his best to compose the agitated peer. So Hawarden was to have its double wedding. The couples drove about together, read aloud, or struggled with the endless complexities of sorting out the sisters' property. There was so much to plan—their future lives, the fireworks, entertainments for the wedding guests, and eternity, for one another, to say

nothing of a pair of honeymoons and something for the village children.

The summer weeks flowed by, until the morning came when they were married in the mating world of 1839. The occasion, it must be confessed, was not lacking in emphasis. For the wedding carriages were followed to church by a notable procession recorded in the *Chester Chronicle* :

Band.

The Hawarden Castle Lodge of Odd Fellows.

Band.

Hawarden Temperance Societies.

Band.

Benefit Societies.

Band.

Tradespeople in large numbers.

The bridegrooms, deafened but happy, drove in the sixth carriage ; and it is scarcely to be wondered at that Lyttelton, always a little apt to be upset, broke down again. Even Gladstone was unstrung. His unerring diary attributed it to the music : indeed, it was a wedding-march that might have shaken stronger nerves. So the happy couples were floated to felicity on floods of tears. For a slightly emotional piety seemed to prevail. Besides, in 1839 the age of sensibility was not so distant.

Even the honeymoon retained something of the dual character of that stupendous wedding. The smiling pairs were separated for a fortnight or so ; and in an ecstasy of good intentions Gladstone, alone with Catherine, conversed on the fallibility of private judgments, on amusements, on the sanctity of time, on Sunday observance and the relation of charity to private expenditure. He prized his treasure highly ; but in the very act he seemed to test her precious metal in the fires of improving conversation. At intervals he read the classics. But early the next month they were all back at Hawarden once again for " a beautiful meeting between the sisters " and the less spiritual delights of a

servants' ball ; and then the wedding tour started in earnest. This time two bridal carriages left for the coast ; two pairs embarked for Greenock ; and as they drove through Scotland, the obedient Highlands unfolded all their romance. Sometimes, indeed, they went half-way to meet it in full Highland costume, dressed somewhat unaccountably in Lennox tartan, each bride upon a Highland pony and each bridegroom striding attentively beside a pony's head. There was a happy interlude behind the Scotch Baronial battlements of Mr. Gladstone's northern home, where everyone played a great deal of chess and the family circle was completed by the arrival of an unmarried brother-in-law. Then more excursions past Braemar and Ballater, still unconscious of the impending glories of Balmoral. But Lyttelton went south at last ; and the Gladstones were alone for solitary chess and billiards—" C. and I in deadly conflict—too great an expenditure, perhaps, of thought and interest"—and endless leisure for reading Scott and Trench and Keble, to say nothing of the Bishop of London on Education and annotating Rothe's *Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche*. A round of visits carried them to Christmas ; and as the new year opened, they were moving into Carlton House Terrace. It was near the House of Commons, still nearer to the Carlton Club, and quite near enough to the Sunday school at Bedfordbury, where Mr. Gladstone taught. Rules were drawn up to guide the household, and the first bookcase was put up with due solemnity ; the servants' library was chosen with immense deliberation ; district-visiting began ; and in the ordered virtue of her home Catherine prepared for sixty years with Mr. Gladstone.

## 2

The sequel was not quite expected. It was easy to foresee a lifetime of devotion, with two figures steadily receding down the long avenue of public life, and two heads growing grey together. For she was bound to fulfil the lyrical prophesy of their best man at the wedding and to—



soothe in many a toil-worn hour  
The noble heart that thou hast won.

\* \* \*

Be thou a balmy breeze to him,  
A fountain singing at his side ;  
A star, whose light is never dim,  
A pillar, to uphold and guide.

(Such predictions are the natural penalty of inviting the Professor of Poetry to officiate as groomsman.) And the appointed rôle was nobly performed. Two generations of delighted Liberals watched the slim figure follow him down the cheering lanes of public meetings, steady him as he climbed on to innumerable platforms, tug off his coat, and sit demurely folding it as the big voice in front (with a suspicion of Liverpool about it) settled inimitably into the first deep "Mr. Chairman and fellow-electors." The House of Commons knew what hand had filled the "short, thick-set pomatum-pot, oval in shape, four inches in height," from which those eloquent lips drew intermittent (and slightly mysterious) refreshment, when the cheers gave a convenient pause ; and an eye raised to the Ladies' Gallery might catch a glimpse of an eager face that looked down at him, had watched unwaveringly, indeed, since distant evenings before the Corn Laws were repealed, when "I found myself nearly upon Lady John Russell's lap, with Lady Palmerston and other wives," and was still watching as he crouched, half a century away, beside the faithful Morley for a spring at the apostate Chamberlain. A Member once enquired why a small section of the brass grille in front shone so brightly, and was informed by the attendant that Mrs. Gladstone's hand had polished it. She pinned the tea-rose in his coat, contrived the endless complications of a migratory politician's life (a niece testified to "the manœuvres behind his back, the extraordinary dodges to smooth his path or oil his wheels or cocker up his health"), and was occasionally suspected of offering a hand to be shaken under his cape by eager (but exhausting) Liberals. The Professor of Poetry

had invited her to be her husband's fountain and (for the matter of that) his star. But far more often she performed the humbler, though more useful, functions of his screen. There was so much to screen him from—his own unresting energy, hosts of supporters, anxious colleagues, and the dreadful irregularities of a politician's diet. One day in the Midlothian election they paid a call just after lunch; tea was produced but, as he had a speech to make at three o'clock, respectfully declined; a cautious hand replaced it on the hob; the meeting opened, and the electors were informed of Lord Beaconsfield's iniquities at becoming length; the afternoon wore on, until the orator returned and the same hospitable hand offered the dubious refreshment of the same tea. Queen Eleanor, one feels, would have consumed the deadly brew and fallen at her husband's feet. But Mrs. Gladstone was more skilful. She let him take the cup, then sidled past and got it somehow underneath her mantle; a sudden admiration of the view drew her towards a window; and the Lowland landscape drank the Lowland tea. Small wonder that he adored her for a lifetime passed (as an artful hand has diagnosed it) in "feeding a god on beef-tea."

Not that her *rôle* was secondary. When she married, a cheerful friend offered congratulations on having someone at last to write her letters for her; and she made endless use of him—"Could you order some tooth-brushes and brushes *cheap* for the Orphanage?" "Have you remembered to peep in on the Miss D.'s? Only open the boudoir door and you will find them." "Did you manage the flowers (or grapes) for Mrs. Bagshawe? She lives quite near Portland Place." "If you have *time*, please bring down a little present for my three-year-old godchild; there are beautiful Bible prints at the Sanctuary, Westminster, and also we want a common easel from the same place, 5s. to 8s. 6d., to hold the big maps for the boys." Schoolroom easels, Bible prints, tooth-brushes, flowers, and the socially desolate Miss D.'s were all to be fitted somehow into the hunted

life of a Prime Minister along with Ireland, Egypt, and the Liberal Party, to say nothing of an uneasy Sovereign, Homer, and his own perpetual anxiety on points of Church discipline.

So Catherine was more—much more—than a lieutenant, a mere blank numbered oval in the group of supporters clustering behind him. A less distinctive wife, one feels, must have developed features of her own in the solitude of life with a public man, who habitually worked fourteen hours a day when in office. But even without this discipline Catherine was quite unmistakable. The two sisters of the famous double wedding had been known as “the Pussies”; and her engaging quality seems to survive in the affectionate persistence of the nickname. For, mated with the sterner figure of “Uncle William,” she remained “Auntie Pussy” to two devoted generations; and young people do not nickname great-aunts for nothing. Besides, she was a Glynne. The Glynnes were good; but under all their goodness there resided a redeeming streak of oddity. It expressed itself in a cheerful inconsequence, in an abiding taste for nicknames and portmanteau words and the etymological eccentricities of an elaborate family dialect. Catherine was an arch-Glynne, presiding imperturbably over vast Biblical migrations of innumerable Lyttelton and Gladstone children and their countless attendants, that ended in triumph on the devastated floors of Hawarden or Hagley, where a sardonic brother once recorded “those great confluences of families which occur among the Glynnes,” with the agreeable turmoil of “seventeen children there under the age of twelve, and consequently all inkstands, books, furniture, and ornaments in intimate intermixture, and in every form of fracture and confusion.” That was her *milieu*; and she revelled in it. Whilst Uncle William went his majestic way, she ran breathlessly behind in a splendid whirl of nephews, missed appointments, and wild domestic improvisations. A devoted niece admired “the astonishing intricacy of her arrangements, the dovetailing and never-

ceasing attempts to fit in things which could and wouldn't fit." She told him once to his marmoreal face what a bore he would have been, if he had married somebody as tidy as himself. The contrast was complete—"the People's William," intent upon his stately progress, and his Catherine careering alongside with her gay assumption that "you were always ready to fall in with her and dovetail, and swap butlers, and supply meals, beds, cooks, or carriages at a moment's notice," and her endless trail of little notes, written on scraps with broken pens and generously smudged, each "i" without its dot, each "t" uncrossed, and every period lacking its punctuation.

The very contrast made her more adorable than ever. With Mr. Gladstone sitting by, how could anyone resist the sweet inconsequence that once feelingly complained to a startled lunch-party at Windsor of the intolerable tedium of captivity for a notorious burglar—"But, oh, how dull he will be—conceive the utter dullness of a prison"? Hers was the bright, uncomprehending eye that looked up at someone asking if, when she said that a will had been "declared vull," she meant "null and void"; and hers the soothing explanation, "No, dear, I always say *vull*." That, surely, was the school at which Mr. Gladstone learned to sing plantation melodies or waltz swaying round the hearthrug to the disreputable catch, sung in duet :

A ragamuffin husband and a rantipoling wife,  
We'll fiddle it and scrape it through the ups and downs of life.

The song and dance are highly unlike him; but they were very like Catherine indeed. For, to their great advantage, she remained more Glynne than Gladstone.

Not that levity was, in any sense, her principal component. For the Glynnes were good; and goodness, for Catherine, meant something more than formal piety or regular attendance at public worship. That element, though, was never absent, as a startled modern may infer from the delicious entry in her diary—"Engaged a cook,

after a long conversation on religious matters, chiefly between her and William." But her piety found its expression far beyond family prayers and the servants' hall. Sometimes, indeed, her benefactions had a fine inconsequence, with ailing school-teachers packed suddenly to Hawarden, wings hurriedly carved off at table and despatched post-haste to the village—"and let it go hot to Miss R. at once." But her good works could be no less systematic. The House of Charity in Soho and the Newport Market Refuge were her abiding passion, with Mrs. Gladstone for their indomitable almoner, committee-man, and maid of all work. She was perpetually dashing off from Downing Street into the East End or to her Convalescent Home at Woodford. Startled electors saw the Premier's wife alight from third-class carriages at inexplicable stations; and her days were a delirious round of workhouses and hospitals, punctuated by official parties and her endless vigil in the Ladies' Gallery. They missed her once from Hawarden after morning prayers: she was off after a typhoid case, had put her patient in the train, took her to Chester, left her installed in hospital, and was home in time for tea and an enormous charade of grandchildren. Small wonder that when someone at the height of the cholera epidemic saw a lady busily engaged in bundling babies in blankets out of the London Hospital and asked who she might be, the reply was "Mrs. Gladstone." Some of the rescued infants even found their way to the august official attics of Downing Street. But she was still busy in the stricken wards, walking them quite as fearlessly as any Lady with a Lamp.

Hawarden itself was full of her—her Orphanage that had its birth in the Lancashire cotton famine, and the smaller home first opened for a knot of London cholera orphans. She even partnered her husband in the heroic embarrassments of his rescue work. A startled friend once asked him, "What will Mrs. Gladstone say if you take this woman home?" And the deep voice replied, "Why, it is to Mrs.

Gladstone I am taking her." For when they reigned there, Downing Street saw strange encounters ; and her urchins matched his Magdalenes. Each of the partners led the other on. She even led him into the composition of lyric verse upon minor items of intelligence from her Convalescent Home. He was a secret rhymers of considerable ardour and pursued with gusto the poetical problems presented by the style of Messrs. Parkins & Gotto and the no less unusually named bride of his last Home Secretary—

And by sea or by land, I will swear you may far go  
Before you can hit on a double for Margot.

But few Liberals believed their monumental leader capable of greeting with verse his wife's announcement of the happy news from Woodford that " the cook and the Captain are going to be married." He received the intelligence with one of his deepest silences ; and she complained in wifely irony, " Oh, of course, you are too full of Homer and your old gods and goddesses to care—stupid of me ! " But an abstracted hand had reached for a sheet of paper ; the pen—the slightly portentous pen of *The State in its Relation with the Church and Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*—moved rapidly across the page ; and she was presented with a highly indecorous epithalamium, from its spirited opening,

The Cook and the Captain determined one day,  
When worthy Miss Simmons was out of the way,  
On splicing together a life and a life,  
The one as a husband the other as wife—

to its riotous conclusion,

Miss Simmons came home and she shouted, " O dear !  
What riot is this ? What the d——l is here ?  
If the Cook and the Captain will not be quiescent,  
What can I expect from each Convalescent ? "  
Fol de rol, fol de rol, fol de rol la.

He wrote it just to please her ; and one may guess from

the light-hearted scrap how much she helped to keep him human.

For, after all, he was the greatest (and, perhaps, the best) of her good works. There was his life to be arranged, his innumerable comings and goings to be contrived, the silence to be kept round his work, and all the blows to deaden which adversaries aim at politicians, though they mostly fall upon their wives. It was easy enough to stand smiling at his side and watch the cheering crowds—and then he could always think of such wonderful things to say to them, although she had to stop him once until the reporter could get near enough to hear. But the silent hours were not so easy, when he was sleeping badly, or the incorrigible Disraeli seemed to flourish like the green bay-tree, or his own friends began to fail him. That was when she stretched a shielding arm above him to take the blows; and he began to fear them more for her than for himself. For the unvarying alternation of success and failure had hardened him. His life had been like a deep excavation where defeat and recovery seemed to lie in geological layers, one above the other, over an almost geological period of time.

But one day the alternation ended, since recovery is more than doubtful for a resigning Premier of eighty-three; and as he faced the prospect, he became a coward for her. For when his last Cabinet had rounded with infinite solicitude upon the leader whom they were prepared to worship, but not to follow, he dared not take home the news. Morley must tell her; Morley was always serviceable; he should sham tired himself and pass the ball to Morley. So Morley dined at Downing Street; and after dinner, while the others played backgammon, she led the anguished Morley to a sofa, "behind an ornamental glass screen." Mr. G. had told her that he was fagged and that Morley would report how matters stood. And there on the sofa, while the two old gentlemen rattled their dice beyond the screen, he told her. She was quite unprepared, as the blow fell.

Not quite the last, though. She was alone for that, in the vast Abbey where she left him ; and the watching crowds saw the hope living in her eyes, as " she went in like a widow, she came out like a bride." And in a year and a few weeks she joined him, dutiful as ever, with a murmur of " I must not be late for church." Indeed, she was not.



## MARY ARNOLD

*In the days when twenty fellows drank out of one large mug  
And pewter were the dishes and a tin can was the jug ;  
In the days when shoes and boots were three times a week japanned,  
And we sat on stools, not sofas—there were giants in the land.*

RUGBY MAGAZINE.

### I

WE will meet her, if you please, after the due preliminaries. Parted from sorrowing relations with tears and good advice and unusual quantities of luggage, left overnight at the Peacock, Islington, we will sup manfully (as befits a young gentleman just starting on his travels) off steak and oyster-sauce washed down by the very brownest stout in a corner of the coffee-room. Retiring early, we will repel with proper indignation the efforts of sentimental chamber-maids to call us a little darling and (*proh pudor!*) kiss us good night. Then we will dream of home and London streets miraculously lit with gas and post-boys and "Peelers" in their novel uniforms and ostlers and shop windows, until disturbed at something before three in the morning with information that the Tally-ho for Leicester will be round in half an hour and don't wait for nobody. (The Tally-ho, it seems, is best for our purpose, since it goes straight to our destination, while the other coaches set down at Dunchurch; besides, the Tally-ho is by report a tip-top goer—ten miles an hour, including stops—and sets every clock between Islington and Leicester by its punctual horn.) And punctually enough the tip-top goer clatters up. Boots' head, inserted through the coffee-room door, ejaculates "Tally-ho, sir"; the leaders stamp outside in the night frost; Guard drops off and slaps himself across the chest, enquiring briskly, "Anything for us, Bob?" We tumble out; and as we tie a comforter, an ostler somewhere in the darkness pronounces

the sublime viaticum—"Young genl'm'n, Rugby; three parcels, Leicester; hamper o' game, Rugby."

The overture was harsh, perhaps, but not without its melody. Even a small exile might find his compensations on "a fast coach in November, in the reign of his late majesty." For as the horn announced the tip-top goer to recumbent Islington, two small, attentive ears observed (though very cold) the spanking leaders and the nearer jingle of the wheelers tuned by the ringing turnpike to a single note, and two small, attentive eyes followed the shifting glare of coach-lamps on the night mist that would pale presently into a breaking day. After three hours or so the punctual dawn, though not noticeably rosy-fingered, unfolded on the grateful subjects of King William IV (or his youthful niece); and all along the road England dutifully awoke according to its station. Shutters fell by magic from shop windows; doorsteps were scrubbed; vast hunting-breakfasts got themselves consumed by sportsmen; labourers plodded to work in smocks; the first market carts came by; gentlemen in pink jogged cheerfully to meet the hounds; and Guard became steadily more communicative. At this stage the young exile begins to acquire extensive (and not wholly reliable) information on the subject of Rugby and the young gentlemen of Rugby and their alarming goings-on—how scandalously free they are with whips and pea-shooters and cricket-bats and other weapons of offence, living, it seems, in a state of indiscriminate warfare with all navvies, farmers, and every variety of peaceful wayfarers; how they poach, climb trees, and indulge in the rewarding, but reprehensible, pastime of removing linch-pins from the wheels of gigs left unprotected outside public-houses; how (slightly terrifying compensation) extremely stern the Doctor is and, on occasion, capable of sending off three of his young gentlemen, each in a po'-chay with a parish constable; and how those are two of them, waiting with tightly buttoned jackets to race the coach to the next milestone.

Changing emotions sweep the novice, like wind across a cornfield. Home has receded now ; even the Peacock at Islington is a mere distant memory of stout and oyster-sauce ; and as they bowl along between the hedgerows, the whole world is filled with their approaching destination—with Rugby and its mysterious denizens and their presiding Doctor. The road continues to unwind, until a hill climbs up the sky, the coach climbs up the hill, and from the brow of it two small, attentive eyes observe a line of buildings between the giant elms of a vast playing-field. So his first sight of Rugby is an ample foreground with a few scattered figures kicking footballs about and a hint of battlements, that soon range themselves in order as the School, the School House, and the Doctor's wall. They take the corner on a wheel or so ; a highly feudal gate recessed beneath an oriel window (that, though he does not know it yet, is where the Doctor exhorts his Sixth) affords, as they flash past, a sudden perspective of grey quadrangle and a few lounging boys ; and Rugby, that does not seem to know it either, holds him for the next half-year—holds him, perhaps, for as long as memory remains to him.

Slightly forlorn, her latest son enters upon uncharted seas and, trying his hardest not to think of home, navigates the dark complexities of the School House. The matron's room becomes his haven, presently invaded by the alarming senior whose study he is to share. For some higher power has, it seems, ordained it so ; and the same power in a kindlier mood summons them to take tea in its Olympian regions. So they march off together, stumble across a hall, and stand presently in a big drawing-room that seems to be all windows, where they are confronted with a boy or so, assorted children, and a man with quick, dark eyes and a fine shock of hair, whom general deference proclaims to be the Doctor. But the Providence which had prescribed that they should share a study and then summoned them to tea, the presiding deity of this Olympus, was seated graciously behind a tea-table ; and in her smile of welcome

they almost forgot to shamble. So, with the due preliminaries fulfilled, we sit down to tea with Mrs. Arnold.

## 2

She was not always a queen regnant. Headmasters' wives rise to their eminence by slow degrees ; and her ascent took the best part of forty years. For the first thirty she adorned her father's rectory in Nottinghamshire, while Thomas Arnold passed through the various stages by which " Political Tommy " grew into " Black Tom." She started in the race five years in front of him ; and she was nearly nine years old when he began to watch the chequered sides of Nelson's line-of-battle ships out of his father's windows in the Isle of Wight. She had turned eleven when his father died with slightly ominous suddenness ; and as she grew, he went to Winchester, went on to Oxford, and out into the world. She had a brother at Winchester as well, who went to Corpus with him ; and the Penroses were inevitably entertained with tales of his prowess—of the " most glorious Scrape " that he got into for playing loo (and for silver, too) although he was a prefect, of bathing-parties on the Cher, and the terrific Jacobin orations with which he scared Oxford in the Attic Debating Society. The two Wykehamists, divorced by fate from their appointed pastures in New College, clung close to one another at Corpus ; and as the Arnolds were regaled with stories of Tom's college friend, Trevenen Penrose, the Penroses in their Nottinghamshire rectory heard a good deal about Tom Arnold. Perhaps the rector did not always listen ; but Mary, one feels, was most attentive. Besides, she was past twenty now, and even in country rectories the best-conducted sisters are not above encouraging a brother to speak of college friends.

So she knew all about him and his speeches and his First in Greats and his slightly ill-regulated taste for " a skirmish across the country " and his Fellowship at Oriel. Whilst he climbed fences, fell into ditches, or sat in Oriel common room to hear old Whateley's logic, she kept her faithful vigil

in the rectory and watched the Trent go by and did her best to be content with the meagre social resources of Fledborough. But the dread milestone of her thirtieth birthday began to loom ahead. Meanwhile, his academic stream flowed smoothly, with an abundance of Herodotus and Thucydides and his own "dear old Stagyrte." Its level waters were scarcely ruffled, when he was ordained deacon ; although he knew a spell of mental agony a few months later, as he faced his priesthood and the dark enigma of the Trinity. Not that he really doubted. But he felt his mental processes to be somewhat unfairly embarrassed by his prospects. The thought that his career required an affirmative conclusion, that "the bias is so strong upon him to decide one way from interest," weighed terribly upon him ; for he was frankly disinclined to solve the problem by the drastic (though practical) recipe of a more worldly friend who, destined for the law, advised the violent suppression of all inconvenient doubts. But, on the whole, his course was smooth enough ; and for a year or so the young Fellow of Oriel floated with the stream. The peace of Oxford, subtlest of Nirvanas, brooded round him ; and in its cosy air he almost seemed to droop, to head in limp contentment for a cycle of Cathay—of walks in Bagley Wood, of college port and textual criticism—until he swerved abruptly towards his crowded hour of glorious life.

He ached to live ; and life, for an unmarried Fellow living in college, is an attenuated thing at best. Something was stirring in him ; and Oxford in 1819 was singularly uncongenial to stirrings of any kind. Pure scholarship, it seemed, was not enough ; a lifetime spent in hunting Orelli and putting Poppo in his place left him somehow unsatisfied, although he never lost his taste for the controversial broadsword. But footnotes, however sprightly, were no substitute for life. Men lived in homes, not in *apparatus criticus* ; and he had no home. The thought of Mary Penrose (and in 1819 he thought of her frequently) made him feel more homeless than ever. A home and Mary soon

became the sum of his aspirations. Besides, he ached to teach as well—and how could he teach anything in Oxford except the answers to examination questions? There was a blind desire in him to educate. But one could teach so little in a lecture-room. True education implied a closer contact than any Fellow could possibly maintain with college pupils. It seemed that education, no less than Mary, called for a home. For if he was to do his duty by them, he must take pupils in his house and prepare them, body and soul, for something higher than the Class Lists. That was his aim in education—to stimulate “1st, religious and moral principles; 2ndly, gentlemanly conduct; 3rdly, intellectual ability.” (The order in which he wrote down his objectives challenged the whole existing scheme of English education and was the formula by which eventually he remade the Public Schools.) So everything—his vague stirrings, Mary, the higher education—pointed in one direction: he must get out of college somehow and into a house. Pupils were easy enough to come by; but he must have a house. There he might earn enough for Mary and practise his ideals of education.

The call was clear enough, although two voices mingled in it. A convenient brother-in-law, who kept a school near Staines, offered to join forces with him; and at the joyful prospect of a house and some real schoolmastering he flung Oxford to the winds. The little staff at Laleham was promptly reinforced by the arrival of himself, his family, and all his books. Now he could have his pupils in the house. He had his aunt as well, to say nothing of his mother and an ailing sister. But still the house seemed to lack something. He had not come to Laleham merely to propel small boys through the flatter regions of Eutropius; and with a happy gesture of completion he brought home a wife.

His bride was Mary Penrose. No one, it may be presumed, was very much surprised. The association was an old one, and it seemed to have the loftiest sanction. For Wykehamists stand with an added confidence at the altar with the

sisters of other Wykehamists. Besides, young clergymen were quite expected to take to matrimony with their holy orders. So their world was not surprised ; neither was Thomas ; and Mary at thirty was long past surprises. They married in the gay summer weeks of 1820, when their fellow-subjects derived unlimited entertainment from the spectacle of their egregious sovereign locked in his preposterous conflict with Queen Caroline. London was loud with breaking glass ; peers listened to the evidence and nudged one another ; and in the country Thomas Arnold was bringing home his bride. It was no part of his design that the flower of Fledborough should bloom alone. For he transplanted her to Laleham ; and the same hospitable soil sustained his aunt, his mother, and his sisters, married and invalid. She played her own part, though. For brides of thirty united with bridegrooms of twenty-five may be relied on to assert themselves. A more youthful wife, one feels, might far more easily have faded into the rich domestic background and become a graceful detail of the family scene. But Mary Penrose was a grown woman. She had her ways as well and set out boldly to be the family historian. Thomas might write his ancient history each evening. But Mary, with ampler (and far more reliable) documents, compiled the record of the household—its daily doings and his choicest sayings, together with selections from his more judicious letters and newspaper comments on his latest pamphlet. Was she not a niece by marriage of the redoubtable Mrs. Markham ? That daughter of the Muses chronicled, with becoming decorum, the fall of empires. But nieces, no less than aunts, may be moved to historical composition ; and Mary's efforts were not unworthy of her austere relative, whom Clio visited in ringlets.

Not that she played a passive part. He loved her deeply ; and the influence of a loved woman is rarely negligible. Indeed, his love for her had quite palpably counted for a great deal in his sudden impulse to abandon Oxford and teach school. She was the star by which he steered in his

first voyage ; and as he plied a labouring oar at Laleham, his dreams were all of her. Laleham, indeed, was anything but Capua for a Fellow of Oriel. The narrow circle and the little house were a high price to pay. It was easy enough for him to write that "it does my mind a marvellous deal of good, or ought to do, to be kept upon bread and water." But sometimes he seemed to feel his exile ; and then, in the first months at Laleham, he thought his very hardest of the goal—"Be the price that I am paying much or little, I cannot forget for what I am paying it." It was for Mary ; and he was almost scared by "the fear that this earthly happiness may interest me too deeply. The hold which a man's affections have on him is the more dangerous because the less suspected ; and one may become an idolater almost before one feels the least sense of danger. Then comes the fear of losing the treasure, which one may love too fondly ; and that fear is indeed horrible. The thought of the instability of one's happiness comes in well to interrupt its full indulgence. . . ." A strange confession for a wooer ; but that he was an ardent wooer is undoubted. So Mary, it seems, was no small part of the motives which took him from Oxford and set him teaching parlour-boarders in the tiny school at Laleham.

She took her share as well. For his system, as a later critic saw it, was always to make "his school a family, his family a school." However trying for his family (and they rewarded their beloved Headmaster with unvarying devotion), the process was highly beneficial to the school ; since it served to mitigate the savage warfare that prevailed almost universally between masters and pupils by the milder influences of the drawing-room. "It tends," he wrote, "to humanise them" ; and the humanising drawing-room, at Laleham and afterwards at Rugby, was Mary's. They came in at tea-time and stayed to talk and look at prints and play backgammon, or sat with them all the evening. No unmarried schoolmaster can use the drawing-room as an instrument of education. There must be someone else there to



pour out the tea and reassure nervous newcomers. So Mrs. Arnold grew to be an essential part of the Arnold system.

She seemed to enjoy it, too. Ambitious friends wrote to complain of his Boeotian retirement and reprove him for using a razor to cut blocks with in his Lilliputian academy for the sons of gentlemen. But he wrapped himself in the deep felicity of Laleham, revelled in unlimited opportunities to bathe and go for endless rambles and wear old clothes or indulge in wild gymnastics, or revealed that "both M. and myself are so entirely happy." Yet when the time came to make a change, his family tastes played a decisive part once more. One is so accustomed to the vision of Arnold steering exclusively by the chilly star of education that it is strange to see him positively refuse a mastership at Winchester, and stranger still to see him accept Rugby on the purest grounds of family advantage. "We had married," as Mary faithfully records, "with a considerable debt, which about this time we contrived to pay off, but our expenses were increasingly faster than our income, and when all had been well weighed, it was decided to stand for Rugby." There were the children now; and their education seemed likely to cost more than a lifetime of parlour-boarders could ever earn for him at Laleham. So he put in for Rugby.

Yet his motives were not all prudential. The work drew him, too, though his eye for country was sadly offended by the indecent nudity of Warwickshire after the rich *décor* of Staines. Was not education his main business in life? And not his alone. For he had come to think of Mary as his fellow-worker in the vineyard. She was thirty-eight, of course; and to thirty-three the maturity of thirty-eight can never play the part of Dora, of the girl-wife, of the docile hand that merely holds the pens and strokes the heated brow. Besides, she played her part. Was not her drawing-room itself a formidable portion of his educational apparatus? Writing to a friend in the weeks following his election, he announced that "both M. and myself, I think, are well inclined to commence our work." How many

schoolmasters in 1828 viewed their wives as fellow-workers ? Here is, perhaps, a neglected secret of the Arnold system, a clue, it may be to the formula by which they made Rugby a patch of homely decency upon the slightly raffish face of Melbourne's England. For Mrs. Arnold in the School House at Rugby was his effective partner. Her touch was needed in the process of making "his school a family," since the family can scarcely function without a touch of matriarchy. She was the matriarch ; her edict allocated studies ; she helped to solve the delicate problems of study-partnerships in the School House (did not the matron break the news to Tom that he was "to have Gray's study, Mrs. Arnold says," and, by Mrs. Arnold's wish, to share it with the little Arthur ?) ; and for a half-year at a time her drawing-room was the home-circle for the tribes which gathered at Rugby. So it was not surprising that *Tom Brown* should carry in his heart "the lady who presided there" and record with a touch of almost Macaulayan eloquence how "many is the brave heart now doing its work and bearing its load in country curacies, London chambers, under the Indian sun, and in Australian towns and clearings, which looks back with fond and grateful memory to that School House drawing-room, and dates much of its highest and best training to the lessons learnt there."

That was her work ; and she did it manfully, whilst her indomitable Doctor pushed out his under-lip and wrestled with unruly boys, Tractarians, school Governors, German commentators, scholiasts, Quarterly Reviewers, and parents. They had the Sixth, in fours, to dinner ; they even followed her into the holidays. Then there was all his sober happiness to be arranged, which left him wondering "what men do in middle life, without a wife and children to turn to." Buried deep in "a home filled with those whom we entirely love and sympathise with," he could spend himself in the incredible exertions of his life of scholarship and controversy and schoolmastering. He was completely happy, and much of his happiness was of her making. Perhaps

she was a little tired sometimes, as her pony ambled round their evening walk and he strode along beside her. He was always most particular about her pony—it should, if possible, be grey and “very small, very quiet, very surefooted, and able to walk more than four miles an hour.” For he hated loitering. The quiet lanes about Rugby saw them on their evening round—through the Headmaster’s gate and past the School, then out of Rugby by the Dunchurch Road to Bilton, and home along the Bilton Road—and as they went, he told her all about Niebuhr and Newmanites and the flowers along the hedges and how the *Northampton Herald* was at him again for his Radical opinions and what the rascal Hook had written in last week’s *John Bull* about “smirking, smiling, good-natured Tom Arnold,” that harbinger of revolution concealed beneath the broad-cloth of “a political parson . . . scribbling to papers when he should be attending to business.” The uneventful fields of Warwickshire lay in the evening light, as the strange couple passed along between the hedges—a voluble, bright-eyed pedestrian with his watchful cavalier—until the Bilton Road brought them to Rugby once again. Unnumbered rooks wheeled unmelodiously above the big elms in the Close, and the tall trees stood in their islands of deep shadow upon its green expanse. Lamps shone out in the Headmaster’s house; and he was soon back in his turret study, amongst his children and his boys, deep in the home that Mary made for all of them.

She had another home as well. For they escaped sometimes from the unheroic landscape of the Midlands—“no hills,” as he lamented, “no plains—not a single wood, and but one single copse: no heath—no down—no rock—no river—no clear stream—scarcely any flowers, for the lias is particularly poor in them—nothing but one endless monotony of inclosed fields and hedgerow trees.” But at joyful intervals, when term was over, the rooks were left in solitary possession of the Close and they fled to Westmorland to revel soberly in the soft greys and greens of Lakeland. He

had all a plainsman's delight in hill-country, and its fervour is nowhere more apparent than in the mounting pulse with which he entered in his journal the approach to Rydal after a holiday abroad :

. "Arrived at Bowness, 8.20. Left it at 8.31. Passing Ragrigg Gate, 8.37. On the Bowness terrace, 8.45. Over Troutbeck Bridge, 8.51. Here is Ecclerigg, 8.58. And here Lowood Inn, 9.4½. And here Waterhead and our ducking bench, 9.12. The valley opens—Ambleside, and Rydal Park, and the gallery on Loughrigg. Rotha Bridge, 9.16. And here is the poor humbled Rotha, and Mr. Brancker's cut, and the New Millar Bridge, 9.21. Alas! for the alders gone and succeeded by a stiff wall. Here is the Rotha in his own beauty, and here is poor T. Flemming's Field, and our own mended gate. Dearest children, may we meet happily. Entered FOX HOW, and the birch copse at 9.25, and here ends journal."

It had been a joy to the returning traveller to feel "the unspeakable delight of being once again in our beloved country, with our English Church and English Law." But the little house among the trees at Ambleside was happiness itself, where he could walk up hills or slide on frozen lakes while Mary decorously sat her pony or went about her household business or trotted in to the post office to fetch the letters. Not that he fled from school. For Rugby followed them; and Sixth Form boys were asked to stay and join their rambles. But there were other friends in Westmorland. Wordsworth had found the site for him (and what a site it was, with a broad window on the noble cleft of Rydal Beck); and, as a dalesman said, "he was ter'ble friends with the Doctor and Master Southey and Wilson of Elleray and old Hartley Coleridge." Mary called at Rydal Mount one morning and was favoured by a terrific recitation of the new-born sonnet with which the poet resisted the extension of the railway to Windermere—

Is there no nook of English ground secure  
From rash assault?

Southey, a rather trying visitor, was there sometimes ; and Hartley Coleridge was considerably embarrassed by an offer of water, where he had looked for beer. But Wordsworth was the *genius loci*. He helped lay out the garden for them and was full of views about their chimneys—how there was much to be said for a touch of colour in them (the Easedale quarries might supply it) and, as for shape, they had best be half-rounded and half-square. So up they went, a little like a rustic version of a steamboat's funnel—strange monument of Wordsworth's preference in chimneys. There were endless walks together and talks upon Reform, full of the poet's dark forebodings and the Doctor's resolutely hopeful outlook. Once, on the way up Greenhead Ghyll, they had a great set-to, and Great Rigg looked down indulgently at the two small, disputatious mortals. But friendship survived these neighbourly differences ; and when the poet went up to Oxford for his honorary degree, the Arnolds travelled across from Rugby to see the ceremony in the Sheldonian. For Fox How, no less than Rugby, was a rare factory of friendships.

But Rugby was her true home, where " father, mother, and fry " (in his cheerful catalogue) filled the Headmaster's house in term-time, even overflowing into the Doctor's study, or indulged in sacrilegious games of family cricket, when the school was absent, on the sacred pitch hallowed by the Eleven, or sat together on still September evenings " under the enormous elms of the School-field, which almost overhang the house, and saw the line of our battlemented roofs and the pinnacles and cross of our Chapel cutting the unclouded sky." The Rugby sky was still unclouded one summer morning, when the little country doctor questioned him about his sudden pains. Had he ever fainted ? No, he had never fainted. Had a relation ever died of chest ? His father had, and suddenly. The doctor looked a little grave ; and Mary was dreadfully anxious. They nursed him for an hour. But it was all over by eight o'clock ; and in

the June sunshine the unmelodious rooks were wheeling over the big elms.

Her life was over too, though she lived on. Starting five years before him in the race, she persevered for thirty more. But it was all an epilogue, with Arthur Stanley writing regularly to tell her how Spain was really just like something that the Doctor had written of it in the third volume of his Roman history; and how he was not quite sure how far the Doctor would have approved of the Alhambra, as "presenting the image of the last elegances and refinements of a feeble and corrupted civilisation, not of the original vigour of a great and growing nation"; but how Gibraltar would have been certain to earn his approval by its uncompromising aspect no less than by its British qualities; and what Paris looked like during the Revolution of 1848 (which the Doctor would most certainly not have admired); and all about his own triumphant progress, so gratifying to a Headmaster's wife, from Norwich to Westminster and on to Osborne, where he was positively telling the young Prince of Wales all about the Holy Land. She loved to watch all their careers, to hear how little Clough, who used to get so inky and so ardent with the school magazine, was getting on, or to read Matt's latest budget with the reviews of *Merope* and what Sainte-Beuve had said about him and how they ought to plant arbutus at Fox How just on the left of the path outside the drawing-room window, going towards the hand bridge. She could still make a home at Ambleside, still listen to the Rotha and watch the cloud shadows drift across Fairfield. But there was no one now for her to make it for. That had been her gift above all others—to make a home. Once she had made one for Tom's parlour-boarders at Laleham; then for himself; and, last and greatest home of all, the School House where they had helped to remake England, under the elms at Rugby.

## MARY ANNE DISRAELI

*But I know'd a Quadder feller as often 'as tow'd ma this :  
" Doan't thou marry for munny, but goã wheer munny is ! "*

NORTHERN FARMER—NEW STYLE.

WHISPERING from its towers the last enchantments of Baroque (or is it Chinese Chippendale ?), the career of Benjamin Disraeli stands like a fantastic summer-house in the trim garden of Victorian England, casting the oddest shadows on those neatly gravelled walks. One sees it always as an annexe, as an outbuilding, as something separate from the grave outline of the main edifice and in a widely different style. Sometimes, indeed, it almost seems to be a Folly, one of those oddities of architecture that never find a second tenant but survive, wistful memorials of a vanished eccentricity, appealing faintly by their tortured outline and their unlikely ornament. No, the best image is a summer-house ; for one can mix more styles in summer-houses. So there it stands in the clear light of eighty years ago—the strange career of a young Jew who, articled to a solicitor, wrote novels, yet lived a stranger novel than he ever wrote. For the Byronic youth lived to be a Victorian Prime Minister, and " his Corinthian style " (as he wrote of someone else's), " in which the Mænad of Mr. Burke was habited in the last mode of Almack's," survived to write State papers. Life was indeed a novel—almost a novelette ; and he ornamented it at every corner with romance—with chibouques and scimitars, with sombre broodings on the Mount of Olives, with the oddest politics, with dreams of an aristocracy restored and a Church resurgent, with peacocks screaming under his windows on the parterres of Hughenden, with Palmerstonian *coups de théâtre* that sent British battleships to Besika Bay and Sikh infantry to Malta, with a demure

flirtation with his unprepossessing Sovereign, with an earldom, with Peace, with Honour, with the crown regilded, with the Garter. It was all a little like some rococo landscape-gardener's pagoda, hung at every corner with bells and Chinese lanterns, but breaking out occasionally in Gothic ornament ; Greek pediments appeared in unexpected places, and horseshoe arches hinted at the Alhambra.

But which of all the decorations of his strange career was stranger than his wife who, voluble and odd, caught something of his eccentricity in clothing and startled his colleagues with her sudden speeches, until the most sedate of them considered having their leader's wife to stay in order to "complete the astonishment of our neighbours"? And yet she mothered him for thirty years, till he could write of her that "there was no care which she could not mitigate and no difficulty which she could not face," and died, a Viscountess of his creation, at eighty. As the impassive figure by her side progressed indomitably towards the chilly summits of public life, she babbled gaily on. Lady Beaconsfield may surely be counted a bell on that queer pagoda, which its architect had hung with care and mourned when it fell silent. So she smiled up at Dizzy and Dizzy smiled down at her, as they grew old together. But who can tell what she made of it, or he of her?

# I

She was not beautiful ; but she was bright. Even the dark young gentleman they met at Bulwer's admitted as much. Did he not write off a full account of his encounter with "a pretty little woman, a flirt, and a rattle"? It was surprising that he remembered her at all, because the evening had been crowded. There were so many peers for him to talk to. To say nothing of "L. E. L.," the Muse of Brompton (one really met everyone at Bulwer's in 1832). Besides, he had to watch his moment for a word with Tom Moore, who was extremely civil and showed signs of having read his latest novel. So it was wonderful that he remem-



bered. But then he always had a memory for pretty little women to whom he was presented "by particular desire." He made his bow; she shook her ringlets at him and confessed that she "liked silent, melancholy men." He might, by way of repartee, have shaken his. For those were the days when his distinguished pallor was set off by a generous *coiffure* of gleaming curls that almost reached his shoulders, and he was a little apt to startle evening parties with a velvet coat, lace ruffles, and a spirited waistcoat in delicious conflict with a pair of purple trousers striped with gold. She made her arch avowal. But he only answered, in his dreadfully sarcastic manner, that he "had no doubt of it." Her volubility, it seemed, had scarcely ruffled his Byronic gloom. Still, he remembered it.

Her feminine fluency impressed him at their first meeting; and he was not easily impressed. She was a sailor's daughter, married to a man of means who sat for Maidstone in the House of Commons. He was a strange young man with enigmatic airs, two novels to his credit, and an unholy taste for the society of his betters. He knew all that could be learnt of life in his father's library, a kindergarten and two private schools, a journey up the Rhine, a little unsuccessful speculation, and a Grand Tour in the East. Like his *beau idéal* in fiction, he had seen through everything—"On all subjects his mind seemed to be instructed, and his opinions formed. He flung out a result in a few words; he solved with a phrase some deep problem that men muse over for years." For he was nearly twenty-eight. But she (if biography must be unchivalrous) was forty. Yet her volubility stayed in his memory. When he tried to describe it to his sister, words failed him. Indeed, her power of rapid and continuous speech was very like a force of Nature; for it had something of the flow, all the continuity, and more than all the sparkle of Niagara.

Besides, she had a husband in the House of Commons; and the young writer's fancy was beginning to stray in the direction of politics. True, his political convictions were

slightly lacking in precision. Had he not written gaily, "Am I a Whig or a Tory? I forget. As for the Tories, I admire antiquity, particularly a ruin; even the ruins of the Temple of Intolerance have a charm. I think I am a Tory. But then the Whigs give such good dinners, and are the most amusing. I think I am a Whig; but then the Tories are so moral, and morality is my forte; I must be a Tory. But the Whigs dress so much better; and an ill-dressed party, like an ill-dressed man, must be wrong. Yes! I am a decided Whig. And yet . . ." there were obvious attractions in the *entrée* to a political house, even though his host was a Tory member and the dinner parties were sometimes a little dull. Besides, his lady sparkled endlessly and liked silent, melancholy men. They overlooked the Park, and he was soon lunching there to see a review. He met Joseph Bonaparte as well, and houses where one could encounter ex-Kings of Spain were not to be despised. So his frilled shirts, Byronic collars, and embroidered waistcoats were seen in Mrs. Wyndham Lewis's drawing-room in the gay years when he was poet, novelist, and politician by turns. His epic poem failed; he lost several elections; but he was mounting in the scale. Was he not taken up by Lady Blessington and the incomparable D'Orsay? The dandies liked him; Mrs. Norton took him to the play; even the Tories melted. For Lord Lyndhurst seemed to fancy his politics; the Duke was credibly reported to have called him manly; and he was positively elected to the Carlton. He was a Tory now, though of slightly nebulous principles, wrote slashing articles for them, and was generally expected to come into Parliament. So no one was surprised when the Whips sent him down to fight the second seat at Maidstone.

The sitting member was the husband of his talkative acquaintance, and they drove down together. The crowd before the hustings showed an unpleasant tendency to greet the new candidate with cheerful cries of "Old clo'", as well as with allusions (of an unexpected literary character) to

"Shylock." But the combination was successful; a solitary Whig was routed; and young Disraeli drove back to London as an elected member of the first Parliament of Queen Victoria. The Wyndham Lewises had brought him in—for the local prestige of the sitting member had been of inestimable electioneering value to a strange candidate—and Mrs. Lewis would have been less than human if she had not gloried in the achievement. But she was never less than human—sometimes, indeed, a little more; and now she wrote with unaccustomed solemnity to a relation.

Mark what I say—mark what I prophesy: Mr. Disraeli will in a very few years be one of the greatest men of his day. His great talents, backed by his friends Lord Lyndhurst and Lord Chandos, with Wyndham's power to keep him in Parliament, will insure his success. They call him my Parliamentary *protégé*.

For her silent, melancholy man was launched and, better still, was launched under her colours.

There was a pleasant interlude, in which they went to stay with his bookish father "among our beechen groves" at Bradenham, admired the dogs, the folios, the adoring sister, and the younger brothers; and once more a relative of Mrs. Lewis received the news that "Our political pet, the eldest, commonly called Dizzy, you will see a great deal of; you know Wyndham brought him in for Maidstone with himself." For it was pleasing to make careers for dark young men with melancholy manners, and more pleasing still to learn from them how "dull and *triste*" it was after she left their homes, with dutiful messages that "all unite here in love and affection and compliments to you and Wyndham" and the shy addition, "I send my quota." She was at Bradenham again a few months later and learned once more on her departure how greatly she was missed and how flat and dull she had left her hosts—"almost as dull and dispirited as you think me." But life was a little full for her that winter. Her husband was not well; and the

very day before his youthful colleague made a maiden speech of some celebrity, he died ; and Mrs. Lewis was a widow.

## 2

She was, to be ungallant, a widow of forty-five with a bright eye, a restless tongue, and an abundance of dark curls. At first bereavement overwhelmed her ; for the shock had been extremely sudden. Her young friend, assiduous in consolation, was among the first callers at the darkened house ; and he was soon writing to her in a mood of gentle reminiscence about political engagements at "Maidstone—that Maidstone where we have been so happy !" His tone, in her early weeks of widowhood, was grave and friendly. He proffered advice ; he multiplied assurances of a warm place for her in the affections of his family circle ; he wrote gay chronicles of life in London to solace her exile ; he assured her with a new note of devotion that "the severe afflictions which you have undergone, and the excellent, and to me unexpected qualities with which you have met them, the talent, firmness and sweet temper, will always make me your faithful friend," and generally caught the guardian's tone in a manner that was highly creditable to a young gentleman of thirty-three comporting himself as an old family friend. The rôle was self-allotted, and young Disraeli became the sympathetic *raisonneur* of Mrs. Wyndham Lewis's comedy. For her silent, melancholy man was growing up.

There was a gradual alteration in the tone of his communications. His letters, which had been subscribed in March, "God bless you, dear friend. D.", progressed in April to "Ever your affectionate friend, D." But before May was out, her youthful correspondent was "Your affectionate D." Slightly cheered by these endearments, her drooping spirits rose so far as to make him a little gift of one of those elaborate (and occasionally disastrous) watch-chains, of which he was particularly fond. His acknow-

ledgment was almost lover-like—"I assure you that with unaffected delight I felt that for the first time in public I wore your *chains*. I hope you are not ashamed of your slave. . . . Farewell! I am happy if you are." A note of romance seemed to be creeping into the more austere tone of her youthful guardian. June went by, and the young Queen was crowned. But even the joys of pageantry failed to distract him; and in July he scrawled a note to her among the glasses on the table of a coaching inn to acquaint her that "you have not been the whole day a moment absent from my thoughts," followed a morning later by the more ardent line, "Let me avail myself of this moment, which I seize in a room full of bustle and chatter, to tell you how much I love you." For it is plain from all the signs that month that he had offered marriage.

His views on marriage were, perhaps, slightly less romantic than his opinions upon other subjects. It was not many years since he had written to his sister: "By the bye, would you like Lady Z—— for a sister-in-law, very clever, £25,000 and domestic? As for 'love,' all my friends who married for love and beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them. This is literally the case. I may commit many follies in life, but I never intend to marry for 'love,' which I am sure is a guarantee of infelicity." That page from an old letter may be a momentary pose, an airy fling, a young man's facile and all-knowing cynicism, or just a clever aside escaped from an unwritten novel and dashed off to impress a round-eyed sister in the country. But the long record of Disraeli's friendships with women scarcely marks him as one of the world's lovers. For his last novel was a sustained pæan in praise of female friends, regarded solely from the point of view of their utility to rising young men; his first (and by far his strongest) feminine attachment was to his sister; and the ladies whom he distinguished with his friendship were, with one shadowy exception, advanced in years and almost uniformly unattractive. Indeed, the amorous episodes in his novels were of the wildest unreality.

For Romance in her more ardent forms seemed somehow to elude the incurable romantic.

Romance and courtesy alike dictated his first attentions to his late colleague's widow. It was delicious to assume protective airs, to wipe away her tears, to lean in manly attitudes above a drooping figure posed in graceful proximity to an urn. Besides, she was distinctly eligible. His family was always pressing him to marry, to secure his fortunes, to ensure a line of squires for Bradenham; and what more promising *parti* than a vivacious lady with an income and windows overlooking the Park? So he abandoned himself to romance. His predecessor died in March; and in July Disraeli offered marriage. His divinity was pardonably coy. For bereavement was something of a duty in 1838; and she required a year in which to wear her weeds and study Mr. Lewis's remarkable successor. His passion rose to heights that autumn. Writing her name "in large characters" on a sheet of paper, he placed it before his desk and, under this inspiration, essayed a tragedy in verse. The inspiration failed. Her name was Mary Anne: the tragedy was far from good. His ecstasies increased, as she prescribed maternally for his passing ailments. But though the New Year opened on a lover's frenzy, his pride began to suffer from the long delay. The insistent wooer pleaded; but his goddess was still exasperatingly coy. She played him—sometimes delicately, sometimes with a less felicitous touch. Once her fatal garrulity so far overcame her as to permit an unforgivable allusion to the material advantages of marrying her—she mentioned money. Her lover's pride was touched; he towered into indignation and was desired to leave the house—that eligible house which overlooked the Park. That night he poured out all his bitterness on paper. Money? Yes, he had first thought of her for her money, "influenced by no romantic feelings." But even her money was a snare—"much less than I, or the world, imagined . . . as far as I was concerned, a fortune which could not benefit me in the slightest degree; it was merely a jointure

not greater than your station required ; enough to maintain your establishment and gratify your private tastes." So he had loved her for herself, only to be rewarded by base suspicions of unworthy motives. Profoundly wounded by the imputation, he renounced her in a tempest of romantic eloquence : " Triumph—I seek not to conceal my state . . . my victim head . . . the scoff and jest of that world, to gain whose admiration has been the effort of my life." He closed upon a slightly unchivalrous note—" For a few years you may flutter in some frivolous circle. But the time will come . . ." It was exactly what he had said to the House of Commons when it, too, refused to hear him—his invariable threat. Less obdurate, his goddess melted instantly, begged him to come to her, denied her imputations, pleaded the embarrassments of her widowhood which imposed delays upon their happiness—" I am devoted to you." She was indeed. The idyll was resumed ; and when the House rose, they married at St. George's, Hanover Square, a bride of forty-seven kneeling at that modish altar beside a bridegroom of thirty-four. Yet who could say which of them was the elder ?

## 3

The overture was odd enough ; but a still odder piece ensued. For their melody endured more than thirty years, and she lived to see him Prime Minister, he to make her a Viscountess. In a Plutarchian moment she once contrasted them :

Very calm.

\*            \*

He is a genius.

\*            \*

His whole soul is devoted to politics and ambition.

Very effervescent.

\*            \*

She is a dunce.

\*            \*

She has no ambition and hates politics.

She wronged herself. For the long remnant of her days was devoted to his politics and his ambition, and he remained (as he had been in the beginning) her "political pet."

They were the oddest couple. The world observed a husband who distilled his utterance in measured oracles and was gravely attentive to his babbling partner, while she rioted in a glorious excess of speech, which varied from a gay confession that she never knew whether the Greeks came after or before the Romans, or simple *gaffes* in the spirit (though not quite the idiom) of Mrs. Malaprop, or still wilder expositions in a manner all her own of the inferiority of Greek sculpture to her "Dizzy in his bath." Startling to the ear, she was almost equally bizarre to the eye; for her style of dress appeared to veer uncertainly between the ship in full sail and the Burmese idol. This lively, lovable eccentric informed the world with cheerful candour that "Dizzy married me for my money, but if he had the chance again he would marry me for love." The world was sceptical. But then the world was unaware of how she mothered him; it never heard who supplied his medicines and cut his hair; it knew nothing of little dinners eaten off two pairs of knees in a waiting brougham between division-bells in Palace Yard; it never stood outside a lighted house that overlooked the Park to watch a carriage drive up after midnight and release a hungry politician to polish off a bottle and a bird under a pair of eyes that had waited up for him. It knew so little of her immense devotion. But her husband knew; and his long memory was capable of inexhaustible gratitude.

At first she came into his world and was initiated bravely into the mysteries of Rothschilds and Montefiores. She met the Bonaparte pretender and scolded him loudly for rowing them on to a Thames mudbank; and when slightly solemn youths began to cultivate her husband, she listened brightly to their endless talk about a new political party (it called itself Young England) that was to regenerate Church, throne, and people, to say nothing of annoying Sir Robert



Peel. They treated her with the grave courtesy reserved for the one married woman in a circle of undergraduates and sent messages of tremendous chivalry, desiring to be laid "at the little feet of Madame." She was at Deepdene playing, as someone wrote, Proserpine to her "gloomy Dis.", when he got the notion of embodying their new ideas in a trilogy of novels. Indeed, he dedicated the second instalment of it "to one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathise with the suffering; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided, its pages: the most severe of critics, but—a perfect Wife!" But though she was the smiling *vivandière* of Young England, she made no other contribution. It was quite enough for her that Dizzy was to be leader. Those were her politics.

Once, at least, this principle inspired her to a disastrous initiative, when she wrote to Peel, pressing upon that frigid man her Dizzy's unanswerable claims to office. The charm failed to work. But she was a skilful partner in his electioneering; and respectful tradesmen told their Member that she was "such a gay lady, sir! You can never have a dull moment, sir!" She even managed to maintain a friendship with Mr. Gladstone through the most heated years of his rivalry with her adored champion. Yet her normal rôle was more passive. For she gathered his praises to fill budgets for the proud relatives at Bradenham or for the strange old woman at Torquay who took such an interest in him. It was her ear that almost caught the Queen herself saying to someone, "There's Mr. Disraeli." When he went up to Oxford to be capped for his honorary degree, her eye smiled down at him from the Sheldonian gallery; and he put in his eyeglass, ranged along the line of watching ladies, found her, and kissed his hand with exquisite *sang-froid*. She was in Paris with him, when they dined with the new Emperor at the Tuileries; and, quite unperturbed by gold-braided chamberlains and watchful ministers and tall *Centgardes* in blue and silver, she told his lovely Empress all about her

imperial master's incompetence in rowing-boats. She even followed him to Windsor, whose grim portals were rarely opened to Ministers' wives ; and she was positively honoured with a place at the Prince of Wales's wedding named by Majesty herself.

So as her political pet mounted the long ascent, she mounted with him. But her work was done behind the shifting scenes of that astonishing pageant. For she was his unfailing nurse. It was years since she had prescribed the drastic remedies of cayenne and stout for his youthful ailments ; but a middle-aged Chancellor of the Exchequer could still attribute his final skirmish in defence of a falling Tory Government "to your getting up so often, and especially to the laudanum, for, though I did not sleep, it soothed my head." He was fifty-four now, and she sixty-seven. But they aged gracefully together ; and once, when both of them were ill at the same time, there was a charming fusillade of little notes between the sick-rooms :

You have sent me the most amusing and charming letter I ever had. It beats Horace Walpole and Mme de Sévigné.

Grosvenor Gate has become a hospital, but a hospital with you is worth a palace with anybody else.

Your own

D.

" . . . but if he had the chance again he would marry me for love." Perhaps.

A few years more, and she could share his triumph. For Dizzy was Prime Minister of England, and one gusty night in 1867 she stood by his side in Downing Street receiving everybody, from the Princess of Wales to Mr. Gladstone, at the great party in the new Foreign Office. There was a dreadful storm that evening, and she was very far from well. But Dizzy was Prime Minister, and she was seventy-six and happy. She had quite caught his tone now. When she thanked the Queen for flowers, she intimated in the rich Disraelian manner that "their lustre and perfume were

enhanced by the condescending hand which had showered upon him all the treasures of spring." And when she re-decorated the house at Hughenden, it was her taste that Gothicised that unpretending mansion into a rococo casquet worthy to enclose the great romantic.

But the years were growing shorter. Soon she was nearly eighty, and even her political pet was sixty-seven. She could still lend French novels to young guests (the guest was Harcourt, but the novel remains nameless); Disraeli's lunch-basket, when he set out for Balmoral, was still provided with "a partridge breakfast, and a chicken and tongue dinner; and plenty of good wine," eliciting affectionate thanks "with a thousand embraces, my dearest, dearest wife." But "Miladi" failed a little, and her husband walked beside her carriage on the walks of Hughenden—those walks which she had planned. Illness kept her in town one summer, and they drove for miles together, exploring London and its startling environs with a map. Then she saw the trees of Hughenden again, and Disraeli reported a successful "hegira from Grosvenor Gate." But she failed once more; and he was left to stare with a tormented face at the dreadful prospect, "if anything happens. *I am totally unable to meet the catastrophe.*" It came, though. But her long devotion was not ended. He found a tender line from her—" . . . and now, farewell, my dear Dizzy. Do not live alone, dearest. Some one I earnestly hope you may find as attached to you as your own devoted MARY ANNE." For he was still, was always her political pet.

## EMILY TENNYSON

*Man for the field and woman for the hearth :  
Man for the sword and for the needle she :  
Man with the head and woman with the heart :  
Man to command and woman to obey ;  
All else confusion.*

### THE PRINCESS.

A MODERN ironist has drawn her. Trotting in one morning to the study at Farringford, she found clever Mr. Woolner, all in overalls and bearded to the lips, busy modelling her poet's head—the austere head of 1857, with shaven chin and just the very slightest hint of Medusa in its tangled curls. Not that his Muse was more than usually stern that year. Had he not obliged, at Her Majesty's request, with two extra verses for *God save the Queen* on the occasion of the Princess Royal's wedding to the Crown Prince of Prussia—

God bless our Prince and Bridel  
God keep their lands allied,  
God save the Queen !  
Clothe them with righteousness,  
Crown them with happiness,  
Them with all blessings bless,  
God save the Queen.

—a sufficiently blameless outpouring for any Poet Laureate ? Perhaps her birthday present had been a shade severe—the first two lines of a new *Idyll* upon Guinevere :

But hither shall I never come again,  
Never lie by thy side ; see thee no more :  
Farewell !

Husbands, one feels, have given wives more tactful presents. But Emily could understand : she knew her poet. So when she found them in the study, Mr. Woolner modelling

hard and Alfred with a poet's neckcloth open wide for a liberal display of a poet's neck, she hazarded a mild enquiry. For if Mr. Max Beerbohm's kindly invention is to be believed (and his fancies often tell more truth than other people's facts), she said: "You know, Mr. Woolner, I'm one of the most unmeddlesome of women; but—when (I'm only asking), *when* do you begin modelling his halo?" The rôle was not exacting. But in that little scene she played it to perfection.

There may be further confirmation. For her poet in old age wrote, though the world rarely reads it, his autobiography. A model to biographers, it fills less than two pages, from the slightly self-conscious announcement of its exordium that

*I am Merlin,  
And I am dying,  
I am Merlin  
Who follow The Gleam*

to its closing exhortation to a "young Mariner" to do likewise. This dactylic summary of his career, with the procession of his favourite subjects, of

warble of water,  
Or cataract music  
Of falling torrents,

succeeded by

Innocent maidens,  
Garrulous children,  
Homestead and harvest,

and the ultimate splendours, only a little dimmed by Victorian (or rather, Albertine) allegory,

Of Arthur the blameless,

waning until Arthur faded into the haze with the spires of Camelot, and

to the land's  
Last limit I came——



tradition. But, with a sudden memory of Emily, one wonders rather ruefully what part tradition supplies for the Bard's wife.

## I

Her entry, though, was quite traditional. She entered down a woodland path, dressed modestly in grey. The season was—how could it fail to be?—the springtime; nor was the place unworthy of the occasion, since it was called Holy Well Wood—sometimes, indeed (with a still stronger sense of fitness) the Fairy Wood in Holywell. Its snow-drops were renowned . . . but why paint the lily? He came upon her at a bend of the path. She leaned, a walking quotation, upon a manly arm; for the arm was Arthur Hallam's, half-way to *In Memoriam* already. The maid was seventeen, the poet twenty; and he enquired, with a command of classical mythology that was creditable even to a Cambridge undergraduate in his third year, "Are you a Dryad or an Oread wandering here?" But such questions are easier to ask than to answer; and there is no record of her reply.

That was her entry. The next scene is still more Tennysonian. A younger sister of the nymph married the poet's brother. Now she was twenty-four, he twenty-seven; and they walked up the aisle together behind the happy pair. Better still, the bridegroom was a young clergyman. The village church, the smiling pews, the bridesmaid—who could resist the implications? At any rate, he did not.

O bridesmaid, ere the happy knot was tied,  
Thine eyes so wept that they could hardly see;  
Thy sister smiled and said, "No tears for me!  
A happy bridesmaid makes a happy bride."  
And then, the couple standing side by side,  
Love lighted down between them full of glee,  
And over his left shoulder laugh'd at thee,  
"O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride."  
And all at once a pleasant truth I learn'd,  
For while the tender service made thee weep,

I loved thee for the tear thou couldst not hide,  
 And prest thy hand, and knew the press return'd,  
 And thought, " My life is sick of single sleep :  
 O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride ! "

There had been other meetings—one, a year or two before, when she wore a silk pelisse and they sat together on an iron garden chair and read from the same book. But the hand-clasp at Louisa's wedding was decisive, and they became engaged.

Their felicity, alas ! was sadly delayed. For three years they corresponded with immense energy. A pious bonfire has consumed his letters, and the poet's " silly sooth " of love had perished in its kindly smoke. For he had little sympathy with the public appetite for private things that gnawed even Victorian bosoms. Craving for

A life that moves to gracious ends,  
 Thro' troops of unrecording friends,

he echoed with slightly terrifying emphasis the Shakespearian " Cursed be he that moves my bones." He deplored

the irreverent doom  
 Of those that wear the Poet's crown :  
 Hereafter, neither knave nor clown  
 Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.

For now the Poet cannot die,  
 Nor leave his music as of old,  
 But round him ere he scarce be cold  
 Begins the scandal and the cry :

" Proclaim the faults he would not show :  
 Break lock and seal : betray the trust :  
 Keep nothing sacred : 'tis but just  
 The many-headed beast should know."

He spoke with the indignant (yet not ungratified) certainty of being one

For whom the carrion vulture waits  
 To tear his heart before the crowd !



Biography accepts the rebuke. Indeed, it rather needs it; and guiltier heads than mine may hang a little before resuming their titters at a more convenient opportunity. But, without being a carrion vulture, one may regret the loss of all the love-passages in his letters to Emily Sellwood. For others besides the meaner birds of prey might have enjoyed the spectacle of Tennyson in love.

The graver passages alone survive, in which he regaled her with metaphysics, notes on chance encounters, Welsh topography, and early railway carriages "entirely open, without seats, nothing but a rail or two running across it, something like pens of cattle . . . liker flying than anything else." One day in 1840 he wrote a crowded letter, full of his memories of Warwick Castle and the little room at Stratford, already generously scrawled with visitors' names, where Alfred caught the prevailing habit—"I was seized with a sort of enthusiasm, and wrote mine, tho' I was a little ashamed of it afterwards"—not, it seems, of the vandalism, but of the gesture. For his apology continues: ". . . yet the feeling was genuine at the time, and I did homage with the rest." Then, having duly

waited for the train at Coventry

and

hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,

he wrote to her from London, enclosing "a virgin-ballad never yet written down . . . simple enough at any rate." It was the slightly anæmic tale of "Sweet Emma Moreland" and her highly unsatisfactory interview with Edward Gray, who had already written on another's tomb the discouraging couplet,

Here lies the body of Ellen Adair.

And here the heart of Edward Gray!

That had been a tragedy of misunderstanding. Alfred's was simpler. For though Emily and he understood perfectly—had, indeed, understood ever since that hallowed day in church at Charles's and Louisa's wedding—a poet's livelihood

was tragically small. For even poets have to pay their tradesmen, especially married poets ; and in spite of every effort of the sacred Nine he could not provide for a wife. No fairy godmother appeared ; stern parents intervened ; and since the young man had no prospects, the correspondence was forbidden.

The prohibition was accepted ; and for ten years they never met. He was growing now. For he was launched on London, where Carlyle and the strapping young " life-guardsman spoilt by making poetry " smoked one another into silence across the hearth in Chelsea, Dickens sent books to him " as a man whose writings enlist my whole heart and nature in admiration of their Truth and Beauty," and he walked through the rain in Pall Mall with his arm linked in Samuel Rogers'. His Muse was growing too. Had she not achieved the prophetic quickstep of *Locksley Hall*, the grave perfection of

Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !

to say nothing of *Morte d'Arthur*, with its mounting eloquence, hints of mysterious power,

And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

There was a glimmer of a fairy godmother as well. For Carlyle had overborne a hesitating politician with his " Richard Milnes, when are you going to get that pension for Alfred Tennyson ? " and his still more unanswerable " Richard Milnes, on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks you why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents ; it is *you* that will be damned." Faced with a prospect of eternal torment, Milnes dropped a word to the Prime Minister. The reading of Prime Ministers does not normally include contemporary verse ; and Sir Robert Peel was quite innocent of information as to the object of his contemplated

benefaction. Besides, his head was full of foreign wheat and sliding scales that autumn. For it was the sodden autumn of 1845, when potatoes rotted in the ground and one unrelenting downpour rained away the Corn Laws. But he found time for a glance at *Ulysses*, sentenced (like himself) to

mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not *me*.

The royal pleasure was duly taken; and Richard Milnes escaped (it may be presumed) damnation by a princely grant entitling Tennyson to a stipend of four pounds a week.

His prospects brightened; and almost hopefully he reopened the forbidden correspondence with Emily Sellwood. They had once discussed a poem to be written upon the higher education of women; and now, with *The Princess* in preparation, he consulted her upon a lyric. Her choice (and who can question it?) was for

Sweet and low, sweet and low,

Wind of the western sea.

The book appeared. But there was more in prospect. For he had "a long, butcher-ledger-like book," filled with elegies on Arthur Hallam. They were to be assembled under the title *In Memoriam*; and a publisher had positively promised to pay a yearly royalty on that and his other poems. So the tradesmen had less to fear now. He met Emily again; and, eager swain of forty, renewed his vows with a maid of thirty-seven. They wedded promptly—so promptly, indeed, that the cake and wedding-dresses came too late; though Alfred called it "the nicest wedding" that he had ever attended—and so it was. In later years he added with grave piety that the peace of God came into his life before the altar. The church was by the Thames at Shiplake; and when the couple drove away, owing a large part of the marriage fees (including "the clerk and shirts"), the accomplished bridegroom made a skittish ode to the

Vicar in their wedding carriage, as it bowled through the June afternoon along the road to Pangbourne :

Vicar of this pleasant spot  
Where it was my chance to marry,  
Happy, happy be your lot  
In the Vicarage by the quarry.  
You were he that knit the knot !

For at last, after twenty years of acquaintance and thirteen of courting, Alfred had made the happy bridesmaid of 1837 his happy bride of 1850.

## 2

He loved her ; though his affection might sometimes be mistaken for self-love. For he tended, in his own fashion, to make the object of his love a part of himself. Years afterwards he made a poem for her, by which their love is often remembered :

Dear, near and true—no truer Time himself  
Can prove you, tho' he make you evermore  
Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life  
Shoots to the fall—take this and pray that he  
Who wrote it, honouring your sweet faith in him . . .

The remaining eight of its thirteen lines related to himself. Devotion was its theme. But it was rather hers to him than his to her ; and it never failed him. Poets are apt to be absorbing creatures ; and Emily was happy enough to be absorbed. Not that he failed her. For his allegiance was still unshaken forty years away, and the grandchildren of his first readers found him dedicating the last volume of an octogenarian Poet Laureate

to you,  
This and my love together,  
To you that are seventy-seven,  
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,  
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.

Their honeymoon was sacramental—first to themselves, next to his Muse. For their footsteps turned at once to Hallam's grave, where the first meeting of the three in Holy Well Wood was sadly re-enacted. Then, after an interlude at Lynton, their route became Arthurian, taking them to Glastonbury in

the island-valley of Avilion ;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly ;

and finally, in a small house at Coniston, almost Wordsworthian. That year he turned Wordsworthian himself. For Wordsworth died, and Alfred succeeded him as Poet Laureate in the cheerful expectation, as he explained, that the office would always entitle him to be offered the liver-wing at dinner-parties.

So Emily assumed her duties as a Laureate's wife. They corrected proofs together (he was always "proud of her intellect" and valued her judgment highly), started house-keeping, and fled from the wild discomfort of their first home. Their flight into comfort, indeed, was almost Biblical, with Emily sedately drawn by Alfred in a bath-chair all the way to Cuckfield. Then they ransacked London for a Court suit for him to wear at his first Levée ; and Alfred asked Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, how to behave at Court and received the most indecorous advice. For a year or so they wandered in pursuit of homes. Twickenham received them ; but the poet found its air heavy with cabbages in suburban market-gardens. Besides, the floods were apt to exceed even Alfred's well-known love of water. A bold experiment suggested Farnham (she always liked the sand and heather), and readers might have had such glimpses of the Surrey bracken from the hillsides of Hindhead. But, secure behind its Solent, the Isle of Wight was waiting. They rowed across one autumn evening. The big downs and the sweeping coastline were irresistible. A low house beckoned graciously among its trees ; and Farringford was theirs.

Glimpses of Emily survive from the first years of marriage—coaxing the maids with little comforts; sitting in the small Twickenham garden to hear Layard's *Nineveh* and Herschel's *Astronomy* read aloud; or easing a nervous guest, mildly disconcerted by Alfred's ferocious greeting—"So you have found me out"—with her gentler "You need not take Ally literally: he is glad to see you; but we came here to escape from the too frequent interruptions of London." For old bachelors are often sadly deficient in urbanity; and when Alfred married, he was almost an old bachelor. Besides, a lifetime of male colloquies over blackened clay pipes had not improved his manners. So his asperity must often have been tempered by a wifely murmur from the far end of the table.

She always looked a little frail; but she could laugh and made a charming hostess, full of small attentions. Even the scornful housemaid, who dismissed her lord as "only a public writer," said of her mistress: "Oh, she is an angel." That was the general verdict. Her poet spoke of her "tender, spiritual nature"; and someone else recorded her as

Perfect woman, perfect wife,  
Tender spiritual face.

Indeed, she often wore an ethereal expression. Mr. Watts did his best to render it; and she turned it once full on Professor Tyndall, when he seemed to dwell somewhat unduly on the material side of things. Deeply religious, she once nerved herself to tell her husband that "When I pray, I see the face of God smiling upon me." Small wonder that one evening, after she had gone up to bed he murmured, "It is a tender, spiritual face" to a friend, who remembered the words and wrote them in his poem. For her looks matched her spirit; and Alfred could say of her, with slightly wondering solemnity, that she was "higher than I am."

Even Dr. Jowett, that slightly terrifying compendium of earned doubt, was quite subdued. Himself a connoisseur

of greatness, he trained the Balliol youth for eminence and was the invariable friend of the Victorian great. And even he could grant that Emily was as great as Alfred. For saintliness on such a scale was notable, even in an age of formal goodness. Besides, there was something almost as great in her complete surrender, of which one seems to see a parable in the recorded spectacle of Alfred mesmerising her (with perfect results) after their second boy was born. The Portsmouth guns, in practice for Crimean exploits, boomed with maddening iteration; and Emily was sleeping badly. So Alfred, in Merlin's character at last, plied her with magic passes; and she slept, dutiful as ever.

Not that she was a wholly passive figure. It might simplify the portrait to see her always (as once she was) a faint smile in a bath-chair, wheeled out to see her daffodils. But she was more than Alfred's domestic audience. Her judgment weighed with him in literary matters; and as his method in composition generally took the form of frequent recitation of the growing poem, her attentive ear and eager comment made her almost a collaborator. Besides, she had her own accomplishments. For she set his songs to music. Did she not find a rousing air appropriate to *Britons, guard your own*? And when the news from Russia inspired her husband, stifling ancient resentments, to exclaim

Frenchman, a hand in thine !  
Our flags have waved together !  
Let us drink to the health of thine and mine  
At the battle of Alma River,

she positively wrote two stanzas more, as well as all the music. His rousing call for Volunteers ("Form, Form, Riflemen, Form!") inspired her to a strain which Alfred even found "far more to the purpose than most of Master Balfe's." Years afterwards *Hands all round* was carefully revised for the Queen's birthday; some verses were omitted

as inappropriate to this Imperial occasion—one in particular addressed beyond her borders :

Gigantic daughter of the West,  
We drink to thee across the flood,  
We know thee most, we love thee best  
For art thou not of British blood ?  
Should war's mad blast again be blown,  
Permit not thou the tyrant powers  
To fight thy mother here alone,  
But let thy broadsides roar with ours.

(The prophecy, though too extravagant for 1882, was realised in 1917.) But when the Empire sang its loyal chorus, it roared to Emily's setting,

To this great cause of Freedom, drink, my friends,  
And the great name of England, round and round.

She had graver duties, too. For Farringford was not too far from Osborne ; and when Prince Albert drove over for a sudden visit (and found Alfred's books all over the drawing-room floor), Emily performed a startled curtsy, not less dismayed than the astounded parlourmaid, whom an equerry propelled before them by the shoulders to announce the august visitor to his loyal bard ; while Royal Highness graciously admired the view and undertook to offer a nose-gay of Emily's cowslips to Majesty herself. She saw the Queen as well, in the first years of royal widowhood, when they all drove over to Osborne. There was a fine diversity in the Laureate's callers. One afternoon Garibaldi came to see them and planted a *Wellingtonia* in the garden ; it all passed off extremely well, with exchanges of Italian poetry and praises of British vegetation, though when the *Liberator* had gone, Alfred said a little tartly that he seemed endowed with " the divine stupidity of a hero." Queen Emma of the Sandwich Islands was a more alarming visitor. They made a throne for her out of home-grown wood ; and Emily collected money for a cathedral that was sadly needed in



Honolulu, whilst Alfred listened to Hawaiian music and gave his guest two big magnolia flowers in his best Hawaiian manner. They had American visitors as well ; there was Mr. Bayard Taylor, and the more majestic Mr. Sumner, and the American publisher whom Alfred scared by dropping on his knees in a moonlit field and saying, " Violets, man, violets ! smell them and you'll sleep the better," and Miss Lowell, who had never seen cowslips until she reached the Isle of Wight, to say nothing of the six Americans who walked up the drive one day, when they were entertaining a brace of Bishops. Such are the social ardours of a Laureate's wife.

Then there was all her correspondence—letters to be written to all Alfred's friends, as well as to her own ; notes to Dr. Jowett enclosing letters from the children and asking for suggestions of classical subjects for her husband's Muse ; letters to unknown persons who desired Alfred's advice upon religious matters, as well as to the vocal multitudes of perfect strangers, who persisted in pelting him with the most unreadable of home-made poems ; and strange, excited letters from Mr. FitzGerald, all crying out for answers. But the devoted secretary did not always find her poet a docile master ; witness his narrative dispatched to Browning after the publication of *Harold* :

*After-dinner talk between husband and wife.*

- W. Why don't you write and thank Mr. Browning for his letter ?  
H. Why should I ? I sent him my book and he acknowledged it.  
W. But such a great and generous acknowledgment.  
H. That's true.  
W. Then you should write : he has given you your crown of violets.  
H. He is the greatest-brained poet in England. Violets fade, he has given me a crown of gold.

W. Well, I meant the Troubadour crown of golden violets ;  
pray write ; you know I would if I could ; but I am  
lying here helpless and horizontal and can neither write  
nor read.

H. Then I'll go up and smoke my pipe and write to him.

W. You'll go up and concoct an imaginary letter over your  
pipe which you'll never send.

H. Yes, I will. I'll report our talk.

So her work went on, as long as she had strength to do it.  
But her strength failed before his. There was a long phase  
of mild decline ; and their later visitors found her " a dear  
old lady, a great invalid, as sweet and pathetic as a picture "  
—and more Tennysonian than ever.

Her work was mainly Alfred—Alfred's new poems to be  
planned (" I doubt whether the ' San Graal ' would have  
been written but for my endeavour, the Queen's wish, and  
that of the Crown Princess " ; and *The Last Tournament*,  
" the plan of which he had been for some weeks discussing  
with me. Very grand and terrible " ) ; little books to be  
made up and bound in red or blue paper for him to write  
in ; poems to be copied out and sent to press ; books to be  
cut for him to read. And then there was her Journal to be  
kept, with all their doings and the very best of Alfred's  
sayings. He had asked her to compile their annals, and she  
was faithful at the task. So she recorded visitors, and  
poems thought of, and poems completed, and how the wind  
at Waterloo reminded him of all the dead lamenting, and  
what he said about the woodpeckers in the New Forest.  
Nothing escaped her. His lightest similes were caught and  
recorded by this gentle Boswell—A. in Westminster Abbey  
saying " How dreamlike it looks " ; A. quoting Wordsworth  
on the Simplon ; A.'s dinner-table triumphs ; A. confusing  
Mr. Darwin with his heroic assertion that " your theory  
of Evolution does not make against Christianity," and  
Mr. Darwin answering meekly, " No, certainly not " ;  
and A. making gracious awards of prizes to the scenery of  
Europe—" The Val d'Anzasca is, he thinks, *the grandest*

*valley that he has seen in the Alps,"* or "' The Pyrenees,' he said, 'look much more Homeric than the Alps.'" She watched A. in every mood and at every moment, earning the right to her last happy murmur: "I have tried to be a good wife." So perhaps there was a part for the Bard's wife after all.

## EMILY PALMERSTON

"*And is that Lady Montfort? Do you know, I never saw her before.*"

"*Yes, that is the famous Berengaria, the Queen of Society, and the genius of Whiggism.*"—ENDYMION.

PERHAPS the species is extinct. Perhaps it never was a species, but some delicious accident of time and manners and a lady that produced in all her brightness the fabled figure of the Political Hostess. And since that legendary dawn, which faded long ago, how many more have strained towards it? Anxious queens of large, unmanageable parties; dowagers inclined to cross-examine guests on distant sofas; young political wives entertaining young political friends with a consequential air and a slight tendency to contradict—each fancies that the goal is reached and stands, fondly superb, the Political Hostess of her dreams. The novelists, of course, have been very largely to blame—Disraeli first, and later Mrs. Humphry Ward, waving their eager readers on to the bright peaks of social Matterhorns. For what more tempting than to yoke one's hero with an incomparable mate, who should preside with matchless dignity in vast assemblies or sail through the bright saloons dispensing nods, where nods were needed, and smiles, where a smile might smooth away a crisis? This nonpareil, I sometimes fancy, is as legendary as the phoenix. Fiction has made such use of her that fiction must have been her parent. And yet there is a case or two. Once in a century, perhaps, chance will produce a woman to play a woman's part in politics. In other centuries, though; not, I suspect, in ours. For politics are still a male arena, and in male assemblies our women are apt to grow a little hoydenish. Besides, they nearly all aspire to play men's parts. For are not most of them

that dreary nondescript known to variety programmes as "male impersonators"? Such Violas in breeches can never hope to pass for Political Hostesses. That was a woman's rôle. But in a milder age it was just possible; and once (or twice, at the very most) the world beheld her, rarest of all—still rarer than her legendary mate, the statesman.

France preferred a *salon*, where some solitary figure of light inspired a circle and respectful hearers clustered round an arm-chair or a sofa that dispensed news, epigrams, and entertainment. But in England, homeland of matrimony, the great hostess must be a wife or nothing. No hostess counts without a host. She cannot entertain without one. He may not be conspicuously entertaining, but he must be there; arriving guests expect two smiles as they come up the stairs, two bows to send them down. A lonely hostess at a political party would be an unpardonable solecism. But so, beyond a doubt, would a solitary host. Thus the perfect consort is manifestly indispensable to every public man: the party Whips ought to supply them. Yet how many statesmen married hostesses? Motives of chivalry (and caution) exclude the present from the scope of my enquiry. But even the past is not more crowded. For I can think of only one. How notable she was, though—the very greatest hostess of her age and married to its most English statesman.

## I

One saw her best, I fancy, at Cambridge House on party nights, with the big rooms all lighted and the stupendous London footmen, whom Mr. Thackeray loved, bawling the names of the whole kingdom and half the Continent. Even the Holy Father had been seen there, when he was only a Cardinal. For as enlightened foreigners a hundred years before had hurried to see Stowe, Blenheim Palace, the Tower of London, and Mr. Pitt sipping his water in awful majesty at Bath, they hurried now straight from Dover to

the Thames Tunnel, the Crystal Palace, and on to one of Lady Palmerston's parties.

They were almost legendary affairs, with all the world in its best clothes and Palmerston's blue ribbon and Emily, "her head held high," as someone saw her, "always very smart and sparkling, and looking so well in her diamonds." (A malicious essayist insinuated that "one knows there is a real crisis when Lady Palmerston forgets her rouge, and Palmerston omits to dye his whiskers.") The company was magnificently mixed. An ambassador or two looked in for a word with the Prime Minister; Whig colleagues aired themselves, released from the Treasury Bench for an hour or so; young members angled for a smile and felt like rising men; even Radicals expanded in the unaccustomed glow of social eminence. There were Tories too; for Cambridge House was catholic in its attentions, and the Opposition was received as well. So Mr. Disraeli made his bow and dropped his phrases. But her net was cast more widely still. Men of letters, lured from their dark retreats, blinked in the candlelight; scientists looked unnaturally wise; and editors—Lord Palmerston had a particular fancy for editors—raised gratified countenances, with a watchful eye to see if other editors had been invited. The buzz was general, as Palmerston's big laugh moved through the rooms. Then guests began to slip away, as footmen bawled for carriages downstairs in Piccadilly and the rooms emptied slowly. The company went home to write it all down in its diary—how the Prime Minister had been most affable and in the best of health, though the Austrian ambassador looked rather grave and Mr. Cobden distinctly out of place; how sulky Mr. Greville seemed, and what Mr. Disraeli had been overheard to murmur among the ices. But the big rooms were empty now; and Palmerston, alone with Emily, was saying with his charming smile, "Well, my love, how well you have managed it to-night." And Emily (a young relation heard them) would reply, "Yes, really, we never had a nicer party; you seemed to please everybody." That was

the end of an evening at Cambridge House. Then they went up to bed ; footmen came in and snuffed the candles ; and the stiff Empire chairs were left to stare at one another in the big, silent rooms.

Or if one was very lucky, one might have a glimpse of her *en petit comité* at Broadlands. The great country house in Hampshire, with its tall portico that looked across a dreaming river, was full of her ; and she, as usual, was full of Palmerston—how he could put things right, if only they would let him ; what rascals all the Tories were ; and how extremely trying his colleagues began to find John Russell. Even Mr. Greville was less sceptical than usual, when he came down for Christmas and listened to her eager talk, although her party loyalty sometimes jarred on him a little ; for she was the very best of Palmerstonians. Her lord was mostly invisible among his papers, standing all day to write in his incomparable hand on a tall desk behind a parapet of red boxes. He might look in on them at lunch to take his orange, or join the guns for an afternoon among the coverts, if all the Foreign Office drafts had been disposed of. But Emily was always on guard, full of his grievances, denouncing enemies, and keeping a watchful eye for unexpected friends—"Cavour, is that his name ?—the Man we were to meet at Hatherton's . . . would it not be right to ask them to dinner Saturday, and any other few I can think of ? " That was her life ; and as Lord Palmerston confounded his (and England's) enemies, gaily proceeding from strength to strength, the deep voice beside him exclaimed perpetually, " Stay ! we will have a party." They invariably did. She wrote the cards for them herself, whilst her two girls addressed the envelopes ; and for a quarter of the Nineteenth Century Lady Palmerston's parties helped to govern England.

## 2

She climbed to this agreeable eminence by degrees. She was by birth a Lamb : and Lambs resided with becoming

dignity at Brocket. The founder of the house, a country lawyer with a gift for managing estates, had built the mansion in the very latest mode of Georgian elegance and died a baronet. His heir, Sir Peniston, sat in the House of Commons, where he voted faithfully for Lord North and was rewarded by his leader with a bright drop from the fountain of honour. For under that refreshing dew, which played rewardingly over the parched surface of the King's Friends, he blossomed into an Irish peerage; and the world learned to know him as Lord Melbourne. The house was full of children—some young brothers, one of whom was a sleepy boy named William, a romping girl, and Emily, "a little thing all eyes." Her ladyship was painted by Sir Joshua; so were the boys; and Mrs. Damer, indomitable servant of the Muses, modelled the heir as one of the more elegant Roman deities. So the bright sands ran out, as Gainsborough painted duchesses and Mr. Walpole wrote his letters. But as the Eighteenth Century expired, the world was plunged in unaccountable disorder. For France had lurched ungracefully into a wild career of revolution, and Europe was at war. But whilst invasion threatened and the bare hills above Boulogne were white with the French tents, the Lambs pursued their upward way. That summer, as Villeneuve broke the blockade and ran for the West Indies with Nelson in pursuit, William was decorously married into the Whig cousinhood (did he not say once that the Whigs were all cousins?); and on the very day that Bonaparte learned with a mounting hope from a bundle of English newspapers that his escaping fleet had turned at last towards the Channel, little Emily stood in the big Whitehall drawing-room beside the slightly solemn Cowper and listened to her own marriage service.

Her bridegroom was a Whig as well, although she might have overlooked the fact in favour of others that were far more exciting. For he was extremely handsome and an earl, yet not too proud (although a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire) to acknowledge a distant connection with the poet



Cowper. Besides, he had a splendid house at Panshanger, not far from Brocket ; and the proximity to home was distinctly reassuring. So Emily was Lady Cowper, a bright-eyed countess in the delicious mode of 1805 (as Lawrence painted her), with straying curls and a small head that turned to look over a most inviting shoulder. Her earl was charming, and for some years she scarcely noticed that his paces were a trifle slow. For he was not exactly dull ; " I never saw a man," as someone wrote, " less dull in my life, but he has a slow pronounciation, slow gait and pace." Sedateness, however creditable to a fifth earl and a poet's noble kinsman, is a little apt to pall. It may outweigh more solid qualities ; even a profile may be less admired if its utterance is unduly measured, a perfect figure seems less perfect if it moves too slowly ; and husbands who run to such deliberation have themselves to thank if spirited young wives occasionally seek other entertainment. Emily was still, was always young : and perhaps her handsome earl began to pall a little. There was London, though, to cheer her with an infinity of parties and the long line of chariots in King Street, St. James's, that stood outside the mystic door of Almack's, where Mr. Willis scanned his nightly throng and Lady Patronesses, sterner than Cerberus, waved off the uninitiated. There was more, perhaps, than Almack's ; for a husband's sober paces might be pleasantly relieved by a gay young bachelor—and Lord Palmerston was gay, was young, was really most attentive.

The tall young man, whose lips were always smiling in a perpetual consciousness of exercise and health, was in strong—perhaps in welcome—contrast with the handsome gravity of her husband. He never moved too slowly or said too little. He danced ; he rode to hounds ; he drew a Cupid in her album (they called him " Cupid," too) ; he even dropped into slightly sententious verse. At intervals he administered the army. For he was Secretary at War, generally accounted " painstaking and gentlemanlike to the highest degree." But, assiduous at the War Office, he was no less

assiduous in George Street, Hanover Square. The world, indeed, thought of him only as "a handy clever man who moved his estimates very well, appeared to care but little for public affairs in general, went a good deal into society"; and perhaps the world was right.

Cowper, as husbands will, began to ail. They travelled for his health; and German spas are the least enlivening of places. Even home was scarcely more entertaining, since her consort seemed to specialise in Whig grandees. Em did her best—"I do all I can to like that great Peer who is so much Ld. C.'s admiration, but I cannot. . . . However I am *trop bonne femme* to show this or to say a word against him to Ld. C., I must do myself the justice to say that I never in my life set him against any of his friends but always tried to increase his likings." Worse still, he derived a gloomy satisfaction from watching her in the big rooms at Panshanger "writing out the Chancellor Cowper's diary and illustrating it with all the Portraits of remarkable persons of his time whom he mentions—it will make a very handsome and interesting book—and what is better, it gives Ld. C. very great pleasure to see it going on." For the tone of her references to him was growing ominously dutiful; and when duty occupies the home, pleasure is apt to lie outside it.

Pleasure, indeed, which took the smiling form of Palmerston, was often found at Almack's, where the sharp Russian eyes of her friend, the Lieven, saw them together. She quite confessed her interest in him and wrote off to tell her brother how glad she was "to find Lord Palmerston has done himself such credit by the talent, discretion, and temper he has displayed during all this time, and if Hume has not managed to reduce the Estimates, he has at least reduced the Secretary at War, for he is grown as thin again as he was." Her husband was unwell that year. His rheumatism was worse; and Emily, more dutiful than ever, expatiated on "Lord Cowper's kindness and good nature to me, which is so very great that I really do not know how

sufficiently to show my gratitude for it." The tone was odd. For some husbands might have been alarmed by such excess of gratitude. Perhaps Lord Cowper was still kinder than he knew.

Not that the lights of Almack's drew her from his side. She even loved to be at Panshanger in winter. But the bright eye that Lawrence painted was watching Palmerston's career. Now he veered towards the Whigs; his course and hers were closer, and her brother William stayed up to vote for him at Cambridge. Soon he began to air his views on international affairs; and her indomitable friend, the Lieven, primed her "*chère, chère amie*" in George Street with diplomatic information that was manifestly intended for the ear of Palmerston. For that easy-going *beau* began to count in party politics; they even talked of him as the political heir of Mr. Canning, and the Russian embassy was hopeful (though its hopes were sadly disappointed) that he would prove a rewarding pupil. So Emily might make a Whig of him and help him to be a great man into the bargain. Besides, he was so kind when he went to Paris in the recess and wrote her all the gossip, returning loaded with presents for them all. And when she wrote to thank him, he was—perhaps it gave her the very slightest thrill to write it—her "dear H.," though Harry Palmerston was still scrupulous in addressing "dear Lady Cowper." They were seen together sometimes; and Mr. Creevey leered when he met them at Lady Sefton's, while Mr. Greville wrote in his most malicious vein about "the Lover." She was not afraid to help him, though; and when the Whigs came in, she pressed Madame Lieven to say a word for him to the Prime Minister, who was a particular friend of hers. The word was spoken; and when Lord Grey named Palmerston his Foreign Secretary, it is just possible that some part of the credit may be Emily's.

So there he was, a great man at last, with William for a colleague and her brother Frederick for one of his diplomats. Sometimes he was at Panshanger as well. Not that he

played the constant lover. For one winter, when she went abroad with Cowper, he was positively seen with a rival divinity. Gay chroniclers caught him dining with Lady Jersey and paying morning calls ; he took her to the play and even, if gossip was to be believed, invited her to Broadlands. Other goddesses appeared before this ageing Paris (he was nearly fifty now) ; and there was one season when rumour married him to Mrs. Jerningham, while Mrs. Petre sat, a fair trophy, in the House of Commons to hear him speak and caused irreverent comment on " the venerable cupid." But Emily could wait. Indeed, she had to ; since Cowper, with the familiar obstinacy of husbands, lived on. Her unfailing attention served to prolong his dignified, if invalid, existence. But William was Prime Minister now, exasperating Mr. Greville with " his lazy, listening, silent humour " ; and her " dear H." was his leading colleague. Cowper was failing too. She nursed him bravely—" I read him half the night. . . . I was almost out of my mind with anxiety and with no rest either night or day." She was distracted when he died—" the best of friends and the kindest of husbands. The most benevolent and the kindest of men. The most strictly just, and the most considerate of the feelings of others. All his good qualities would fill a page, and his faults were almost none ; at least I never knew a mortal in whom was less to blame or more to love and admire and respect." For she had loved him. Had he not been kind and handsome ? But, perhaps, she had respected him still more than she had loved him. For her elegy has a slightly churchyard air ; one seems to catch in it the chilling note of a lapidary inscription.

She was lonely now. Her brother Melbourne, busy tutoring his youthful Queen, was hard at work. Em was at Brighton, too, in the first autumn of the new reign, hoping hard that Palmerston would be commanded to the Pavilion. It was almost bold of her. But he was always asking her to marry him now. Even her brother was a little touched by " the excessive niceness of his steady perseverance."

Pressed by his offers, she asked her brothers what to do ; and Melbourne even went so far as to consult the Queen, who asked with schoolgirl sagacity if late marriages between persons of settled habits were apt to be successful. Her Prime Minister confessed upon reflection that married life would be a great change for Palmerston, who had always been "accustomed to run about everywhere." Her brothers were affectionate with her, found her looking "like a pale rose," and thought her gown the night before "rather dashing." For they admired their pretty sister (she was still pretty at fifty-two). But brothers are always apt to be a shade impatient with a sister's maiden hesitations ; and whilst one urged her almost gruffly "if she likes it, to do it, not to potter about it," the other remarked less helpfully in Latin that if she was so doubtful, she had better not. But Palmerston prevailed, as he was apt to ; and before 1839 was out, they married at St. George's—bride of fifty-two and bridegroom of fifty-five. They were still lovers, though ; and their guileless little Queen considered the step highly becoming "because Palmerston, since the death of his sisters, is quite alone in the world." Yet solitude had never been the most conspicuous feature of his life. But he had his partner now.

## 3

Theirs was a perfect marriage, though marriage rarely crowns a thirty years' romance. But their romance was crowned by nearly thirty more of marriage. His honeymoon was little more than a hurried snatch of Christmas leave at Broadlands, where she found him "so completely happy that it is quite a pleasure to look at him." Then they were back in London, and the world began to hear of Lady Palmerston's parties. But who can say when that honeymoon was over ? In two years she was writing of "the Anniversary of my marriage—two years that each deserve a fitch of bacon." Eight more, and her birthday letter told him that it was "the most fortunate day of my

life, the one to which I owe all my happiness, for it is your birthday." In ten she was waiting like a schoolgirl for him to come down to her at Brighton—"whenever you write me word that you have opened your carpet bags, I shall make a bonfire on the Steyne." After four and twenty years she sat, past seventy now, to hear a Prime Minister of eighty steer his Government round an awkward Parliamentary corner, sitting out the long night until the House divided. It was after three in the morning when the figures were announced; and someone saw him vanish up the stairs towards the Ladies' Gallery where Em was waiting, and the old lovers embraced in the summer dawn. For they were still loverlike after more than fifty years. And in the last year of all he could still draw her arm through his and turn his sweetest smile on two young couples to say, "Here we are, three pairs of lovers."

But her life with him was more than a protracted idyll. For the partnership was rich in political consequences. Her unrivalled management of parties gave him a unique advantage over all other public men. All shades in politics met on the staircase at Cambridge House; an awkward interview with Mr. Cobden could end in a civil murmur that "Lady Palmerston receives to-morrow evening at ten." Parliament, indeed, was occasionally shocked by the splendid *mélange* of her visiting-list; and a nervous critic once forced him to explain that no sinister conclusions need be drawn from the presence there of Mr. Delane, of *The Times*—that the editor had done him the occasional honour of mixing in society under his roof (and so, for the matter of that, had the Leader of the Opposition), but with no other obligation than to make themselves agreeable during their stay at Cambridge House. The critic was duly silenced. But his complaint, perhaps, was just. For the parties were of infinite, if slightly irregular, political utility. England had long been governed by the party system; but in the hands of Lady Palmerston the term began to acquire a new meaning.

Her services were not confined to such wholesale assistance. For she could intervene effectively with individuals. Their friendship had brought her brother Melbourne and her friend, the Lieven, into his circle; the virtuous young Ashley was her son-in-law and managed to interest his new relation in the Ten Hours Bill; and once at least she contrived a more delicate transaction for her "dear Harry." When the political alchemists of 1852 were busy brewing a Coalition Cabinet, they had offered him the Admiralty, which he refused for the sufficient reason that he preferred to be Home Secretary. But would they ask him? Em wrote a hurried note, informing the right quarter "if you could speak to Pal<sup>a</sup> again and urge him strongly to reconsider his determination that he might perhaps be induced to do so. . . . If besides your opinion and advice which he so much regards you could be empowered to offer the Home Office I think this might tempt him. . . ." An excited postscript begged the recipient not to "answer this letter unless you can do so by the return of my Servant, as I should be afraid of its falling into P.'s hands." P., one may surmise, would have forgiven her. For the right offer was forthcoming; and she could inform a friend with adorable duplicity that "after many negotiations and many refusals from Palmerston he has at last been prevailed upon by Ld. Landsowne to form part of the new Govern<sup>t</sup>."

Not that she took his reverses with equal calm. Critics often received a stinging note beneath her gilt coronet; even Brougham was once scared into silence by her indignation. And when their skies were darkened by his sudden dismissal, her pen supplied the lightning—John Russell was "a little Blackguard," the Court a nest of anti-Palmerstonian intriguers deep in "a Foreign Conspiracy," just "an intrigue of Normanby Phipps and the Prince worked up by the deep disappoint<sup>t</sup> of the Orleans overthrow"; and indignant Em, her relatives involved, her genders sadly mixed on the noble torrent of her indignation, was left to marvel at her consort's calm, whilst "it is so lucky for

an effervescing Woman to have such a calm and placid husband which no events can irritate, or make him lose his temper."

But her advice could be more pacific. He had his troubles with the Queen, and Emily was full of woman's wisdom on the arts of management. She came almost shyly "poking in with my small advice"—how Palmerston, commanded to Balmoral, should "remember you have only one week to remain there, so you should manage to make yourself agreeable and appear to enjoy the society"; that she was "sure it would be better if you *said* less to her—even if you *act* as you think best"; what a mistake it was to "think you can convince people by Arguments"; and how much wiser on the whole "to treat what she says more lightly and courteously, and not enter into argument with her, but lead her on gently, by letting her believe you have both the same opinions in fact and the same wishes, but take sometimes different ways of carrying them out." Was there ever a more judicious manual for the coaxing of awkward Queens by impetuous Prime Ministers? Women, perhaps, would make the best Privy Councillors under a female sovereign. But Palmerston's was a back that did not bend easily; and in that one respect he remained unteachable even by Em.

So they lived on; and the world changed round them. Ladies put on crinolines and Alexandra curls; the mode for gentlemen veered steadily from D'Orsay towards Dundreary; line-of-battle ships grew smokestacks and armour plating, while the shires were veined like an ivy leaf with lines of railway. But Palmerston presided blandly over every form of change—over industrial expansion, Rifle Volunteers, cheap claret, and Mr. Gladstone. Still, as in 1811, "painstaking and gentleman-like to the highest degree," he ruled Victorian England at its most Victorian. For the reign was at its height; and it was not all his sovereigns. The crowning decade was the reign of Palmerston, a bland dictatorship with Emily for queen, standing perpetually in



her diamonds to smile and nod at all the world as it came up the stairs in Piccadilly, while the big London footmen bawled the names. The bright candles watched her Harry and his "dearest love"; and by the lights of Cambridge House the world—the changed Victorian world—could make its bow to an old *beau* from Almack's and his incomparable *belle*.

## LADY MURIEL JAMES

*Who'er she be—  
That not impossible She.*

CRASHAW, WISHES TO HIS SUPPOSED MISTRESS.

### I. WILLIAM JAMES TO MISS CATHERINE FARQUHARSON, BOSTON

BROWN'S HOTEL, DOVER STREET, LONDON,  
*July 3, 190—*

MY DEAR KATE,—Here we are, travel-stained but happy, at the latest and most distinguished of our addresses. Write quickly, or you may never have a second chance of inscribing an envelope to so eminent a destination. For whilst an adolescent nation eats pea-nuts round you in the innocence of the prime, we are housed in the very bosom of monarchy, nobility, church and army. Piccadilly rolls its tides at our feet. St. James's Palace is visible from the coffee-room with a slight cricking of the neck. And as for Bond Street, pieces of it keep appearing in our food. So you may judge what unaccustomed heights we soar to. Dear Harry, it is true, lends more than intermittent aid to our faltering pinions. He met us at the dock with something unusual in his manner. Not that he looked the bridegroom, or hummed the Wedding March, or plaited flowers in his hair. He was still dear, old, good, innocent, and more than ever lovable Harry. But as our little train rumbled across the tiny English fields to London, he appeared to be doing his very best to say something. You will remember (no one in Boston better) how incurably inexplicit our dear Harry can be, how gracefully he can avoid the crudity of a direct

statement, but by dint of breathing and sighing round and round it conjures up the semblance of a hint. We were at Winchester, or thereabouts, when the intimation opened. But Clapham Junction was upon us, before we were made finally and unquestionably aware that our accustomed *gîte* in Cromwell Road was deemed hardly suitable for participants in the coming celebrations, that something worthier had been prepared; that, in fine, promotion to our present heights awaited us.

And so here, dearest Kate, we are.

2. WILLIAM JAMES TO F. C. S. SCHILLER, CORPUS  
CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD

LONDON, *July 5, 190—*

DEAR SCHILLER,—Of course he will like it<sup>1</sup> beyond anything. I can think of no more suitable wedding gift. His grasp of Pragmatism was always, I grieve to confess, uncertain; and this should serve to strengthen him (to say nothing of Her) in the faith. But why only one copy? Surely no room in their house can be complete without it.

3. WILLIAM JAMES TO MISS CATHERINE FARQUHARSON,  
BOSTON

BROWN'S HOTEL, DOVER STREET, LONDON,  
*July 7, 190—*

MY DEAR KATE,—The time draws on, and with it the process of what dear beatific Harry calls our "immersion." This salutary business is conducted mainly at dinner-time. We have dined with him, with Her (she is extremely tall), with others including (a never-to-be-forgotten festivity) her progenitor, the aged Earl. Life in Boston has accustomed you to encounters with those who have earls among their ancestors, but not (I think) for immediate relatives. We

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Humanism*, by F. C. S. Schiller.

got on well enough. Dear Harry had evidently prepared his *beau-père*, by a corresponding process of "immersion," with copious accounts of my achievements in Brazil with Agassiz; and he remained throughout the evening immovably under the impression that I was a hunter of big game, before whom Nimrod paled. I tried once or twice to shake it. But he reverted to his native state of error, and I entertained him with all the anacondas of the Putumayo. I liked him. But Henry seemed a little pained, when I reported on the homeward walk that, earl or no earl, he seemed to be as liberal-hearted a man as the Lord ever walloped entrails into. (Strange how the proximity of dear Harry always tempts me to the most grotesque excesses of Americanism—but I love to see the big head tilt back and the slow eyes dilate, as the chill creeps along his veins.)

4. HENRY JAMES TO F. C. S. SCHILLER, CORPUS  
CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD

LONDON, July 9, 190—

Let me, my dear Schiller, out of a rich sufficiency of fish-slices, answer with punctual gratitude your so welcome, so helpful (for it is helpful, your offering, isn't it?—especially at such conjunctures, when the need for a trifle of *Humanism* is more than ever urgent for heads rising uncertainly and at ever so long intervals above a tide of *things*, of licences special and otherwise, of jobmasters, of reserved compartments, of string, of tissue paper and bulky packages, of, in a word, the given moment emerging dimly from the wrappings of my present condition), so—*excusez du peu*—congruously chosen that I hang about you, however inarticulately, *de toutes les forces de mon être*, borne up on the above-named flood by just the glimmer of the gleam of a hope that I may hang more proximately still on the—dare I name it?—15th in a fond effort to convey some hint of my, of our, of everybody's thanks "in person."

5. WILLIAM JAMES TO MISS CATHERINE FARQUHARSON,  
BOSTON

BROWN'S HOTEL, DOVER STREET, LONDON,

July 12, 190—

MY DEAR KATE,—Your *Inhaltsvoll* letter gratefully received. Commend me to the brethren, of whom I can hardly think in the imminence of our Saturnalia here. We flourish exceedingly. But dear Harry seems to flag a little. Last evening before dinner he walked me five times round Hyde Park, endeavouring to give expression to some uncertainty of mind. We dined a little after ten; but his scruples are not even yet quite plain to me. . . .

6. FROM *The Times*, JULY 16, 190—

JAMES: FFOLIOTT.—On July 15, 190—, very quietly, at St. George's, Hanover Square, HENRY, second son of the late HENRY JAMES, of Albany, N.Y., U.S.A., to MURIEL AGATHA, eldest daughter of the EARL OF BILTON, of Bilton House, Clarges Street, and Little Sneethings, Warwickshire.

7. WILLIAM JAMES TO MISS CATHERINE FARQUHARSON,  
BOSTON

543 CROMWELL ROAD, LONDON,

July 15, 190—

DEAREST KATE,—The knot is safely tied—Henry pale but determined, and his bride taller than ever under her lace and orange-blossom. The Earl, still convinced of my sporting proclivities, urged me to give the bride “a huntsman's kiss.” They are now speeding to felicity on the arms of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway; whilst we, you will see from the above address, have relapsed into the state from which God was pleased to call us for a brief interval.

## 8. LADY MURIEL JAMES TO HON. ELEANOR DUNCHURCH

LORD WARDEN HOTEL, DOVER,  
*July 15, 190—*

MY SWEET ELEANOR,—Would you believe it, the dear man lost nothing more than a hat-box at Charing X., and one of his own at that. I wonder how you have all got on. The crush on the stairs was dreadful. I was half afraid that *boisterous* brother of his—the trapper, or something equally new-world—was going to attempt a second embrace. So different from dear Henry. He seemed almost thoughtful in the train.

H. has just stepped out for a little solitary walk, to see the moonlight on the sea (would you believe it of him?). I just saw the lights of the Calais boat slipping so peacefully out of harbour. . . .

## 9. HENRY JAMES TO WILLIAM JAMES

GARE MARITIME, CALAIS,  
*July 16, 190—*

Have achieved soundest and roundest identity of simplification leaving Muriel luggage all similar connotations Dover pray breathe appropriate explanations Earl forward letters together with sufficiency male clothing poste restante Dijon nuptial scenes all fantasmagoric now.

## SOPHIA SWINBURNE

*Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,  
Félice and Yolande and Juliette.*

DEDICATION, 1865.

### I. FROM *The Putney Advertiser*, MARCH 21, 188—

LICENSED VICTUALLER requires smart young lady to help with beer-engine ; quiet trade and good prospects : state age. Address Mortlake Arms, Richmond Road.

### 2. MISS SOPHIA GRIMES TO MRS. GRIMES, HAGGERSTON

MORTLAKE ARMS,

*Tuesday.*

Well here I am, dear Mother and all at 28, and its not so bad either. It is a nice little house not so good as the last though but you can't have everything can you ? The folks about here seem a little odd. . . .

### 3. MISS SOPHIA GRIMES TO MRS. GRIMES, HAGGERSTON

MORTLAKE,

*Friday night.*

. . . You remember me telling you about the funny little old gentleman the one I call Clockwork because he goes so regular well would you believe it the other morning just as I drew his pint he Spoke to me. Asked me to name the day and all quite properly. He kept looking behind him over his shoulder all the time and muttering to himself about somebody called Theodore, and I was terribly afraid Mr. Clark would come back into the tap and find him with his little feet dancing over each other and the tips of his fingers fluttering just like two little canary birds. I was that taken aback. " Well did you ever," I said to him, " such goings on " . . .

## 4. A. C. SWINBURNE TO JOHN MORLEY

2 THE PINES, PUTNEY,  
*July 17, 188—*

MY DEAR MORLEY,—Your association with the embodied infamy still known to a few shrinking recreants as Gladstone and for a passing moment—how long, oh Lord, how long?—first where he should be last, Prime Minister of England, may yet be turned to serve a nobler purpose. Can you, official sources of information aiding, notify me in what district of registration I am now residing and where the nearest Registrar of Births and Deaths is to be found? As I ask in a mood of idle inquisitiveness and the question is not one of business, there is no need for our dear Watts to be troubled with your reply.

## 5. A. C. SWINBURNE TO THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

SEAVIEW, ISLE OF WIGHT.  
*August 3, 188—*

Hounds of spring on winter's traces further search superfluous located here with Venus Verticordia in all future editions Poems and Ballads substitute roses and raptures of virtue send bedsocks.

## 6. FROM MAX BEERBOHM, "NO. 2 (BIS) THE PINES"

. . . and one afternoon—it must have been a month or so later—as I sat, a demure intruder, in the morning-room with Watts-Dunton, an unfamiliar voice fell across our post-prandial gossip, stemming that gentle stream on which past and present floated together. Or rather, damming it. For that, precisely, was the voice's business. The folding-doors—the sturdy, grained Victorian doors—flew open and for an instant, as Watts-Dunton and I turned smoothly in our horsehair chairs, a vision greeted us. Not otherwise I thought, did Zeus appear to Semele in the sudden glory of



the thunder-flash. Only that afternoon we were two Semeles, both gentlemen, and Zeus appeared to be a lady. Inverideed she was a lady, mænadically coiffed and bloused in some bright colour. Before the unexpected sight my eyes dropped modestly ; but as the lashes brushed my cheeks, I saw her framed in the doorway. An instant later the picture was withdrawn, as Swinburne's voice came fluting down the stairs. I seemed to catch something about Cotytto ; and, again, a reference to Astarte. The folding-doors clashed to again ; and Watts-Dunton and I, left alone with the horse-hair, dared not raise our eyes to one another's. It was twenty minutes before he spoke again, and then only to mention William Bell Scott without enthusiasm. I never saw her there again. . . .

## JULIE DE GONCOURT

*Qu'est-ce qu'il y a Deux ?*

PANTHÉON-COURCELLES.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE GONCOURTS, 186-

18 *April*.—The jasmine in our garden is more like a Hokusai than ever. This evening, at dinner with the Princess, Flaubert was almost deafening. He is Stentor in the body of Patroclus. We said so. The Princess was amused, but several of our enemies looked envious.

26 *April*.—Sainte-Beuve once saw Talleyrand getting into a cab.

28 *April*.—The rehearsals of our new play are growing almost insufferable. Got resigned his part five times last week ; the scene-painters are on strike ; and the fireman refuses to appear at the *première* unless we will agree to modify the third Act. Dear Jules consoled himself by buying a *kakemono* of the Yoshiwara from Lichtheim for 6,000 francs. I am in need of consolation too. I think I shall confide the gnawing anxieties of an artist born in advance of his times to Julie.

29 *April*.—Julie confided to me in the cab that she has troubles of her own. They may have a documentary value.

3 *May*.—Sainte-Beuve once heard Necker sneezing in the next room.

5 *May*.—Julie's troubles begin to fascinate me. We might make a novel of them. After all, fiction is only the fact of others. But there is no need to worry dear Jules with them in the early stages. The fireman's scruples are entirely satisfied ; but Got has resigned again.

7 *May*.—We were more brilliant than ever at our weekly dinner. Renan is really insufferably vain. My research

is becoming more arduous and has led me to miss five rehearsals in the past week. Julie is a document in herself.

8 May.—Married Julie at the Mairie of the 14th Arrondissement. The fireman, quite reconciled now, acted as witness. My pleasure was only marred by the absence of dear Jules. It is the first step that we have ever taken separately.

14 May.—Our *première*. Neither Got nor the fireman appeared at the theatre. But their absence was quite unnoticed as the disorder, which surpassed all previous standards, stopped the play in the first *entr'acte*. The dear Princess was enchanted. Afterwards a little supper at the Café Riche with the whole company and dearest Julie. She got on so well with dear Jules. The prospects of our novel seem bright indeed.

27 May.—Hard at work on the novel with Jules and Julie. It will surpass all our previous achievements. Sainte-Beuve continues to remember people.

1 June.—The jasmine in our garden . . . oh, I have said that before.

8 June.—To-day Jules gave me two bronze toads after breakfast and announced that he had some news for me. As he seemed a trifle embarrassed, I gave him a *cloisonné* vase and asked him what it was. It seems that he married Julie yesterday at the Mairie of the 22nd Arrondissement. The sympathy between us is so intense that he also, it appears, had reached the conclusion that she is a document in herself. It is our supreme collaboration.

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